# SOME IMPRESSIONS OF MY ELDERS

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

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# SOME IMPRESSIONS OF MY ELDERS

## *BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

*NOVELS*

MRS. MARTIN'S MAN
ALICE AND A FAMILY
CHANGING WINDS
THE FOOLISH LOVERS

*SHORT STORIES*

EIGHT O'CLOCK AND OTHER STUDIES

*PLAYS*

THE MAGNANIMOUS LOVER
MIXED MARRIAGE
JANE CLEGG
JOHN FERGUSON
THE SHIP
MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY

*POLITICAL STUDY*

SIR EDWARD CARSON AND THE ULSTER MOVEMENT

# SOME IMPRESSIONS OF MY ELDERS

BY

ST. JOHN G. ERVINE

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1922

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TO
ELIZABETH CUTTING

who would not give me any peace until I had overcome my idle habits and written all these impressions of my elders for the North American Review.

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# SOME IMPRESSIONS OF MY ELDERS

# THE AUTHOR TO HIS READERS

THE matter which appears in the following pages was orginally contributed, in the shape of a series of articles under the general title of "Some Impressions of My Elders," to the *North American Review* at intervals during the years 1920 and 1921. The order in which the articles appear in this book is different from the order in which they appeared in the *Review*: *this* order is alphabetical whereas *that* was capricious. Some excisions and some additions have been made to them and I hope that I have evaded the danger which besets all those who reprint their journalism in book form, the danger of repetitions. Why I reprint them at all is a point on which I am not able to offer conclusive explanations. I have reached that period of my life when my wish is rather *not* to write a book than to write one, and I have lost all the cheery conceit which caused me in

my youth to feel that anything I wrote ought to be published in a handsome volume. Indeed, when I think of the great quantity of books there already are in this world, it seems to me a sign of hopeless irresponsibility to add to their number. There are so many books that ought to be read, but never can be read because there is not enough time for any of us to do so, that no author can plead justification for printing a book which does not come within the catalogue of those that ought to be read unless he needs the money which, presumably, he will get for it. I cannot urge even that plea, for I have few needs and they are easily satisfied. I have never been afflicted with the mania for owning things, as Walt Whitman calls it, and therefore have no wish to accumulate either goods or money. Were it not for the insistence of some of my friends, I do not suppose I should issue this book to the public at all. We are too prone, we scribblers, to put our casual writings between the covers of a book, when regard for our craft would compel us to reserve that dignity for our greatest efforts; and I have feared for several years now to be one of these offenders.

And yet, one likes to have an array of books on a shelf and be able to say, "I wrote those." The profession of writing gives degree and reputation to a man which is often greater than his due, and people of ability will listen respectfully to the opinions of a lesser person than themselves merely because he (or even she) has printed a book. Many clever men and women actually paid good American money to hear me talk on odds and ends of subjects, although they probably had views on them that were at least as sound as mine and no doubt a great deal sounder. I am afraid of this tribute to the author. It may make us, a much assorted crowd, esteem ourselves more highly than we are naturally prone to do. The mere fact that a man has contracted a profitable habit of putting words together does not entitle him to more of the world's respect that is due to one who has contracted the habit of putting bits of metal together and calling the result a motor-car. I do not know why a man who writes books should regard himself as a better man than one who makes butter. Far less do I know why the man who makes butter should consent to believe that he is less worthy than the man who makes books. But undoubtedly some

such superstition fills the minds of most of us. When a man or woman of ordinary appearance and uninteresting speech comes into our presence, we say "How do you do!" and turn away; but when we are informed that this same person has written a novel, immediately we become interested and turn again to him or her in the expectation that something profoundly illuminating will be said to us. Experience does not cure us of that delusive hope. We do not prick up our ears when a man who owns the largest motor-car factory in the world comes into our presence, and we yawn in the face of a railway director Yet either of these may be far more entertaining company than any author. It is true that the author is presumably more imaginative than the owner of the factory or the president of the railroad, and perhaps the instinctive tribute paid by mankind to the author, even when mankind omits to buy his books, is a recognition of the value of imagination to human life. As such I gladly accept it. Nevertheless, I could wish for more discrimination in these tributes. On the whole, I would prefer to see our authors neglected than over-estimated. No one on earth and probably no one in heaven can prevent an

author from making books while he has breath in his body and energy in his brain and fingers. Therefore, neglect will not greatly harm him. But too much praise, too much consideration of his views, above all, too much profit from his work, will make a sad mess of an excellent writer. I tell myself sometimes that no author should be praised until he is dead, though he might occasionally be dispraised during his lifetime. We should thus save our authors, though there is no certainty in this, from excess of vanity. Let Shakespeare's reputation grow to legendary proportions when he is safely within his grave, but do not, if you desire the best that is in him, let him be often or much praised while he is alive. We have come to a period of time when authors feel that they must write so many books each year. But I would have an author publish a book only when the compulsion to publish it becomes greater than he can resist. Books would not necessarily be better, but they would certainly be fewer, and they might be better.

## II

I have written thus far, partly to resolve my own doubts (which, however, are not resolved) but chiefly to excuse myself to those who may buy this book. I beg of them to believe that I have not reprinted these fugitive pieces without deliberation on their value. My friends tell me that any impressions of men of quality and genius have value, and undoubtedly Boswell's biography of Dr. Johnson confirms many mediocrities in their intention to accept a man's hospitality for the purpose of earning money by describing his personal habits in a public journal. We would be very grateful for an account of Shakespeare no better than any one of the chapters in this book If an Elizabethan had had a mind like Boswell's and had noted down all that he ever heard Shakespeare say, had pressed him with questions on his work, had noted his personal appearance, his habits of dress, his ways of eating, his effect on women, his likes and dislikes, the thousand and one small things which, when summed up, make a man out of a myth, how happy we should all be, how many thousand commentators

and emendators and wrathful Baconians and cypher maniacs would be put out of employment! One could cry with vexation at the thought that there was no one with sufficient intelligence to keep a diary during those last few mysterious years in Stratford-on-Avon when Shakespeare, though still a young man as ages go, ceased to work at his trade and went in silence to his grave. Such are the considerations which have affected me in my decision to reprint these chapters, though they may add very little to any one's knowledge of the men who are described in them. It is, perhaps, an additional factor in the decision that they record impressions made on the mind of a young man by his elders and betters and expressed at a time when he was ceasing to be young. The generation to which I belong was much impressed by the men whose work and beliefs are sketched in this book. All young men, whatever their class or culture, have heroes. The world, indeed, will end when young men cease to have heroes. Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells, Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc, Mr. Yeats and Mr. Moore, Mr. Bennett and Mr. Galsworthy and, rather more remotely, "A. E." were heroes worthy of emulation by me and

the likes of me. George Meredith and Mr. Hardy were too far up the slopes of Olympus for us to hope ever to touch the hem of their garments, but we were alive in the same world with them and sometimes spoke with people who knew them. Once, even, on a hot Sunday morning I walked for miles in Surrey, stiff with determination to see Meredith and to speak with him, even if I should have to skulk about his house the entire day and run the risk of being arrested for suspicious loitering; but my heart failed me when, tired and thirsty, I came into his neighbourhood. Who was I, I demanded of myself, that I should thrust my unimportant person on the notice of a genius? And when I had made that demand of myself, I realised that I could do no other than go away and leave the old man in peace. And so I went, though now I regret that I did, for a little while after I made my expedition to Box Hill, Meredith died and I had lost for ever my hope of seeing him. Time has been kinder to me over Mr. Hardy whose friendship I have the happiness to enjoy.

I have described these men as our heroes, but of course the degree of respect we gave to them varied. The feeling we had for Mr. Galsworthy, for ex-

ample, was diminished by the fact that we were afraid he would turn aside and shed a few unaccountable tears. His work, particularly "The Man of Property," "The Country House" and "The Silver Box," had the great appeal which all passionately sincere work has, but it left some of us in a state of chilled speculation. We were afraid of the effect Mr. Galsworthy had on our emotions and we resisted him more, perhaps, than we ought to have done because we suspected him of sentimentality and were afraid he might let our minds down by pressing too hardly on our hearts. His work excited a remote pity in us, but it did not rouse us to wrath or warm our affections. His characters were the creatures of an aloof, impassive and immovable Destiny; and it is difficult to feel much interest in automatons. If a man is wronged by another man, I may be stirred to his defence, but if he is thwarted or crushed by some passionless Force which cannot be controlled or persuaded or defeated, I am unlikely to do more than murmur "Poor fellow!" and pass on my way. Spineless men, impotently submitting to Circumstances, do not stir the blood, and Mr. Galsworthy's characters, though they might excite our pity, killed

our hope. Mr. Galsworthy seemed to us to say, "Vain youths, it is idle to make any effort! Things happen and they cannot be helped. You are doomed from the moment of your birth to die frustrated! . . ." He is easily made indignant by suffering, but we could not imagine him sounding a call to fight. We could think of him only in the act of surrender. We asked for a challenge; he counselled submission. He was a Tolstoyan, not of his Free Will, for he had no Free Will, but because he could not help himself. He turned the other cheek because he would not clench his fist. Mr. Hardy did not fill our mouths with dust as Mr. Galsworthy did, for his people, though they, too, were creatures of Destiny, were gallant creatures and went to their end with a noble gesture. He left us with the sensation that although we were obliged to submit to a doom determined for us by a Power that understood neither Itself nor us, yet we could put ribbons in our hats. We could die like men and not like rats. When Mr. Hardy celebrated his eighty-first birthday, his younger comrades in the craft of letters presented an address to him from which I quote the following passages:

"In your novels and poems you have given us a tragic vision of life which is informed by your knowledge of character and relieved by the charity of your humour and sweetened by your sympathy with human suffering and endurance. We have learned from you that the proud heart can subdue the hardest fate, even in submitting to it. When Mr. Justice Shallow sought to instruct Sir John Falstaff in the choice of soldiers, the knight said: 'Care I for the limbs, the thewes, the stature, bulk and big assemblance of a man? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow.' So would you have answered him, for in all that you have written you have shown the spirit of man, nourished by tradition and sustained by pride, persisting through defeat. You have inspired us both by your work and by the manner in which it was done. The craftsman in you calls for our admiration as surely as the artist, and few writers have observed so closely as you have the Host's instruction in the Canterbury Tales:

> Your termes, your colours and your figures,
> Keep them in store, till so be ye indite
> High style, as when that men to kinges write.

From your first book to your last, you have written in the 'high style, as when that men to kinges write,' and you have crowned a great prose with a noble poetry."

Those extracts express, I think, some of the quiet quality of courage discoverable in the de-

terminism of Mr. Hardy, but absent from the determinism of Mr. Galsworthy.

## III

Our attitude towards Mr. Shaw, Mr. Wells, Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc was very different from our attitude towards Mr. Galsworthy. These challenging, fighting, protesting men were concerned less with pity for the victims of life than with anger against or opposition to the oppressors of life. They did not wring their hands; they put up their fists. The Early Twentieth Century Youth listened respectfully to Mr. Galsworthy, but he went out to fight with Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells and Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc. These four men did not move him in equal measure. Mr. Wells stimulated him with the quick succession of his ideas, but disconcerted him also with the rapidity with which he shed one idea for another. While we were willing to challenge everything and make it justify its existence, we were eager also to find firm ground for our feet. We felt that Mr. Wells ought to make up his mind a little more carefully before he took the public into his confidence.

Mr. Shaw's awful consistency, even when he took to religion, drew us to him more than Mr. Wells's willingness to modify or enlarge his views. Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton stimulated us in a different way from that in which Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells stimulated us. Mr. Wells sent us out into the world in search of new and more adequate formulæ; Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton checked us in headlong flights with words of warning and remonstrance. They reminded us that man is of the earth, earthy; that man does not live by Good Will alone; that society is composed of a great variety of beings, generous and mean, exalted and debased, hearty and miserable, noble and ignoble, self-sacrificing and self-seeking, kind and cruel; and they reminded us also that unless we took care to remember this vital fact of the variety of man, we should lose our way in the deserts ahead of us. They told us that Mr. Wells's "Good Will" was merely Godwin's "Universal Benevolence" all over again, and that Godwin's doctrine had made the way easy for the Utilitarians and the growth of a devitalizing political theory which expressed itself in the brutal industrial system of the first half of the nineteenth century. Mr. Wells

sought to convict man of a sense of stupidity and disorganization, but they sought to convict him of a sense of sin. Mr. Wells reminded man of his power to aspire; they reminded him of his lapse from grace. Mr. Wells said, "You can climb!" They said, "You have fallen!" He said, "Think!" They said, "Repent!" The world, in Mr. Wells's opinion, needed Love and Fine Thinking. In the opinion of Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton it needed the love of God and faith in the Catholic Church. There probably was less difference in essentials between Mr. Wells and the Chesterbelloc, as Mr. Shaw nicknamed them, than appeared on the surface of things. The Catholic Church in its organized state may move Mr. Wells to admiration, though, in its religious aspect, it probably moves him only to derision. It is a shabby sort of faith, with a tendency to tawdriness which makes it ultimately unsuitable to the spiritual needs of a gentleman, although adequate to the needs of servant-girls and actors. No one who has visited a Catholic church or witnessed the ceremonials in Rome can help, if he or she be possessed of any culture at all, feeling that the whole business is second-rate: the effort of an overblown actor-manager to

interpret Shakespeare in pretentious terms. The fundamental sanity of Mr. Chesterton has, no doubt, saved him from the folly of secession to Rome,* but his partiality for it and Mr. Belloc's rigid attainment to it, made the young men of my time suspicious of the Chesterbelloc. Mr. Belloc said, on a public occasion, that he would support the Church in an act of repression if the Church came into serious conflict with an antagonist; and he proved that he meant what he said by applauding the execution of Ferrer, the anti-clerical, in Spain. It was natural, perhaps, that my Orange blood should boil when I heard Mr. Belloc palliating the offences of his obsolete church, but my more tolerant friends were as dashed by his behaviour as I was, and what respect we had for him was considerably diminished by the knowledge that he would always come to heel when some priest snapped fingers at him. Neither he nor Mr. Chesterton, although their criticism interested and on occasions checked us, ever established dominion over us because of their preoccupation with Catholicism. They might spell the word with a capital C, but we knew very well that Mr. Belloc in his heart spelt it with a small one, and we were

not going to deliver ourselves into the hands of men who were priest-ridden, however "jolly" they might be or however well they might write.

We were not interested in their beer-swilling habits which we regarded as queer nastinesses in otherwise reputable persons. Their efforts to make a tenet of religion out of beer-swilling seemed to us to be as ridiculous as would be an effort by a Chinaman to make a tenet of religion out of opium-smoking.

Mr. Shaw was incontestably the supreme figure among these men of mind who stimulated and influenced the young men and women of the Early Twentieth Century. I doubt whether any one has ever captured or held the fancy of young men as Mr. Shaw captured and held our fancy. Dr. Johnson had an influence as powerful in his time as Mr. Shaw had in ours; but Dr. Johnson's influence was mainly exercised over men of older years than we were, of more established habits than we had; and I doubt very much whether he affected their thoughts and outlook on life so profoundly as Mr. Shaw affected us. He could not persuade the faithful Boswell to accept his view of the American colonists, and his pamphlet, "Taxation No

Tyranny" displeased his friends as much as it appeared to gratify George III and his supporters. Dr. Johnson was a critic and a scholar with very little creative ability; he was too conservative a man to be a man of genius; and he looked back too often for the liking of young men who are always looking forward. His love of tradition and settled order, while it was pleasing to men of an age when comfort and security and familiar things began to attract the mind more than effort and adventure and change, made him unattractive to the stirring minds of young men. Shelley derived from Godwin, not from Johnson.

There is a passage in Boswell's "Life of Dr. Johnson" in which Dr. Johnson's peculiar views on the respect due to men of rank are set out very clearly.

". . . a discussion took place, whether . . . Lord Cardross did right to refuse to go Secretary of the Embassy to Spain, when Sir James Gray, a man of inferior rank, went Ambassador. Dr. Johnson said, that perhaps in point of interest he did wrong; but in point of dignity he did well. . . . Sir, had he gone Secretary, while his inferior was Ambassador, he would have been a traitor to his rank and family."

The question, to Dr. Johnson's mind, was not one of merit: Lord Cardross was entitled to "go Ambassador," not because he was a more skilful diplomatist than Sir James Gray, but because he was a lord while Sir James was only a knight! This extraordinary doctrine, which may be held accountable for much in British history, might appeal to elderly men who love rules and regulations and like to have everything neatly set out in books, but it certainly does not appeal to young men who believe in conflicts won by superior qualities; for young men, as Dr. Johnson himself said on one occasion, "have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect."

Mr. Shaw is incapable of uttering such a remark as Dr. Johnson uttered in support of Lord Cardross's inept behaviour. He has, indeed, said and written foolish things and he is capable of making what are called "debating" points and cheap scores and of saying things for the sake of saying them or of annoying the complacent and the smug; but he is incapable of saying anything which supports a belief that one man shall have precedence over another, not because of his merit, but because of his birth. Dr. Johnson's statement

was not a casual, fantastic, perverse statement; it was a natural result of his general theory of society. It is recorded of him that he declined to leave a room until a Bishop had done so on the ground that the Bishop's office gave him a title to precedence over a man of greater mentality! It was not humility that caused Dr. Johnson to behave thus, for he was an arrogant man, nor was it indifference to such matters, for he was a stickler for respect to himself even when he did not deserve respect: it was his belief in the providential arrangement of society in settled grades that caused him to behave in this way. The man was entitled to quit the room first, not because he was a good man or a great man, but because he was a bishop! There is probably some convenience in this belief, a simple method of preventing incivility, but it is a small convenience which does not greatly matter to youth.

I can imagine Mr. Shaw refusing to go out of the room before the Bishop has done so, in sheer humility or indifference, but I cannot imagine him refusing to do so because of his regard for the man's office as distinct from the man himself. And it is, I suppose, his irreverence for office, more

than anything else, which draws young men to him. He is no respecter of persons or authorities: he criticizes them all, high or low. His courage, his vitality, his arrogance, his humility, his championship of persecuted persons, his impulse to help an unpopular cause not, as stupid people imagine, because it is unpopular, but because it seems to him to be a just cause, and his absolute indifference to vested interests and the power of the majority—these qualities of his draw young men to him as a magnet draws a needle. It is significant, I think, that Dr. Johnson had a very strong dislike of Dean Swift to whom, in many respects, Bernard Shaw bears a close mental resemblance. It is very certain that had Bernard Shaw lived in the eighteenth century, to which, in spirit, he really belongs, he would have supported the Americans as fiercely as Johnson denounced them; and I do not doubt that his would have been the most scathing and powerful of the pamphlets written in reply to "Taxation No Tyranny."

## IV

These, then, were the men who guided in greater or less degree the opinions of the young men and women of the Early Twentieth Century in the islands of Great Britain and Ireland. "A. E." greatly influenced young Irishmen who remained curiously unimpressed either by Mr. Moore or Mr. Yeats. Rumours of his doctrine came to the ears of young Englishman, but they had no personal contact with him as they had with Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells and Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton. It is not possible to calculate the extent to which these men moulded the minds of my generation, but indisputably it was large. No one who grew from youth to manhood between 1900 and 1914 could escape from their influence, even if he were unconscious of it. The greater part of that generation died in the War. The young men who drew their ideas chiefly from Mr. Wells and Mr. Shaw, directly or indirectly, did not live to make their world, and so we can never tell what good or ill would have resulted to mankind had they succeeded to authority. Their bones are buried in France and Italy, in Pales-

tine and Turkey, in Russia and East Africa, on the shores of Gallipoli and in the marshes of Salonica, in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean and the North Sea; and there is nothing to remember them by but broken lands in France and the broken vows of politicians the world over. These young men went out to die in a mood of selflessness that has never, perhaps, been equalled or excelled in the history of mankind; and when their backs were turned, they were betrayed. We cannot look on them again, but we may find comfort in our loss by remembering and considering the men who formed the faith they held.

# "A. E."

## (GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL)

### I

In all the books on Ireland, considered nationally, socially and economically, that have been written in the past twenty years, two men inevitably are mentioned: Sir Horace Plunkett and "A. E.," whose lawful name is George William Russell. Men of affairs in most parts of the world have heard of them, and I imagine that very few of the people who go to Ireland with any serious purpose fail to visit them. I saw Sir Horace Plunkett receive an ovation from a large audience in New York which could only have been given to him by people who had some knowledge and appreciation of his work for his country; and I was impressed by the fact that many Americans asked me to tell them something of "A. E." And yet, though the wide world is not ignorant of their worth, it is very likely that they are less generally known in

Ireland than some paltry politician with a gift for street-corner rhetoric. Once, in Dublin, I praised Sir Horace Plunkett to a man from the county of Cavan, who interrupted me to say that no one in his village had ever heard of Sir Horace. He seemed to imagine that the ignorance of his neighbours proved a demerit in the founder of the co-operative movement in Ireland. Your villagers, said I, may never have heard of Sir Horace Plunkett and are probably very familiar with the names of Mr. Charles Chaplin and Miss Mary Pickford, but does that prove that Mr. Chaplin is a greater man than Sir Horace? I am not indifferent to the merits of Mr. Chaplin—I would go a long way to see him in the movies—but I hope I shall never succumb to this modern shoddy democracy which will not believe that a man possesses quality unless his name is printed frequently in the newspapers and is familiarly known to the rabble. It may be that Paudeen, unfit to do more than "fumble in a greasy till," as Mr. Yeats wrote in his bitter poem, "September, 1913," knows little or nothing of Sir Horace Plunkett whose life labours have brought so much of comfort and prosperity to him—but who cares

what Paudeen knows? Let him grub in the soil, as God made him to grub, while men of mind and quality look after his affairs. It is sufficient for the knowledgeable minority that *they* know of Sir Horace and realize the value of the great work he has done for his country. A false optimism bids us to believe that "we needs must love the highest when we see it," but a sense of reality convinces us that the highest has to fight harder for recognition than the lowest, and that the way to the throne of heaven passes through Golgotha, the place of a skull.

## II

If it be true that Sir Horace Plunkett is less known to his countrymen than some fellow with flashy wits, it is more certain to be true that his great colleague in co-operation, "A. E.," is still less known to them. It would be difficult for any intelligent person to come into the presence of "A. E." and remain unaware that he is a man of merit. He fills a room immediately and unmistakably with the power of his personality. A tall, bearded, untidy man, with full lips and bulk-

ily-built body, he draws attention by his deep, grey eyes. When he speaks, other people listen. If you were to meet him in the street, unaware of his identity, and he were to ask you for a match with which to light his pipe, you would do more than civilly comply with his request. You would certainly say to yourself, "That's a remarkable man!" It is said, with what verity I cannot say, that Mr. Bernard Shaw and "A. E." met for the first time in a picture-gallery in Dublin, each ignorant of the other's identity, and that they began to talk of Art. They impressed each other so greatly that they continued in argument for a long time, and only, when they parted, did they become known to each other. The mountains nod to each other over the heads of the little hills; and men of merit, even when they are not easily recognized by the multitude, are known to each other. One man of merit may, indeed, belittle another man of merit, as Dr. Johnson belittled Fielding, as George Meredith belittled Dickens, as Henry James belittled Ibsen and Thomas Hardy; but at least they are aware of each other.

## III

Very often have writers told the story of how Sir Horace Plunkett, a tongue-tied, hesitant man with very delicate health, returned to Ireland after a long stay in America, to begin the Co-operative Movement, and found, in a Dublin shop, keeping accounts for a tea-merchant, a poet and a painter, a mystic who was also an economist with the capacity, as it afterwards proved, to become the ablest journalist in Ireland. This man of multiple energies was George William Russell, who was born in Lurgan, in the County of Armagh, on April 10, 1867. He is two years younger than Mr. Yeats, eleven years younger than Mr. Shaw, and fifteen years younger than Mr. George Moore. The order of these births is significant. Observe how an aloof artist has been succeeded by a furious economist! Mr. Moore, who began life as a realist after the manner, but not after the style, of Zola, and then turned his back on Zola and sought the company of Turgeniev so that he might pursue apt and beautiful words and delicate and elusive thoughts, was followed by Mr. Shaw, who began life by filling his mind with the ideas of Henry

George and Karl Marx, and then turned his back on both of them in order that he might consort with Mr. Sidney Webb. Mr. Yeats, with his vague poetry and vague mysticism—none the less vague because of the curious care for exactness which causes him to count the nine and fifty swans at Coole and the nine bean rows on Innisfree—followed Mr. Shaw, and in his turn was followed by "A. E." so closely connected with economics that a wag, when asked what was the meaning of "A. E's." pen-name, replied "agricultural economist." *

One cannot, however, leave the matter as simply as that. Mr. Shaw likes to think of himself as an economist, but he is more than an economist; he is John the Baptist pretending to be Karl Marx. "A. E." likes to think of himself as an expert on the price of butter and milk and cows and sheep, but he is more than an expert on these things: he is Blake pretending to be Sir Horace Plunkett. Or

* Mr. Darrell Figgis, in his book on "A. E.", explains the pen-name thus: "Wanting at one time a new pen-name, he subscribed himself as Aeon. His penmanship not at all times being of the legiblest, the printer deciphered the first diphthong and set a query for the rest; whereupon the writer, in his proof-sheets, stroked out the query and stood by the diphthong." Since then, however, Mr. Russell has abandoned the diphthong and prints his pen name as two separate letters.

Walt Whitman pretending to be President Wilson. It has always seemed to me that Sir Horace Plunkett and "A. E.," colleagues in a great enterprise, are the embodiment of the peculiarly interwoven strands of Irish character, of that queer mingling of the material and the spiritual in the Irish people which at once allures and astounds the Englishman, accustomed to keeping his materialism and his spirituality in separate compartments. Sir Horace has a neat and unexpected wit, but he does not appear to me to have much feeling for poetry or for any other literature or art. He has respect for these things and will talk on them sometimes with singular incisiveness, but his interest in them is an outside interest. If he had to choose between a co-operative creamery and the Heroic Legends of Ireland, I do not doubt for a moment that he would choose the co-operative creamery. "A. E.," on the contrary, would choose the Heroic Legends and would give the good reason for so doing that without the Heroic Legends, the co-operative creamery is useless. When "A. E." pleads for the co-operative societies, he does so because he believes that these are part of the means whereby the Irish people will be restored to their ancient stature.

Organize your industry, he said to the farmers, so that you may become what your fathers were, fit company for the Shining Ones, for Lugh and Balor and Manannan, the great and brave and beautiful Pagan gods. Each by himself, Sir Horace or "A. E.," might have failed to make much out of the co-operative movement in Ireland, but both together, each possessed of a different, yet complementary, crusading spirit, could not fail to make a happy issue of it. When Garibaldi appealed for recruits for his Thousand, he offered them wounds and death. When Sir Horace Plunkett appealed for helpers in the Irish Agricultural Organization Society, he offered them hard and discouraging labour and poor wages. Mankind, which responds to a noble appeal as readily as it responds to a base appeal, offered its best to both of them. Garibaldi got his Thousand, and Sir Horace Plunkett got his colleagues.

They were diverse in character, and included Nationalists and Unionists, Catholics and Protestants, peers and peasants. For the first time in Irish history, Irishmen of all classes were united on a matter which had no relationship with passions! There were no angry emotions astir

when the I. A. O. S. brought the diverse elements of the Irish entity into accord as there had been when the union of the North and the South was made many years earlier; and consequently the movement could not be split, as that Union was, by the collision of one angry emotion with another. In face of every conceivable discouragement and even of active enmity and in spite of the grave unhealth of Sir Horace himself, the movement grew in strength until now it is indestructible.* Chief among the colleagues whom Sir Horace gathered about him was "A. E." Mr. Russell could, without doubt, earn a large income as a journalist if he were to offer his pen to a rich newspaper proprietor—his weekly review, the *Irish Homestead,* is the most ably-edited and skillfully-written organ in Ireland—and he could probably earn as much as, if not more than, he receives from his Co-operative work if he were

* I leave that passage unmodified, despite the fact that the Black-and-Tans in the course of their fight with the Sinn Feiners (equally disgraceful to both of them) burnt down many of the creameries. They will be built again. Mr. Lloyd George jeered at Sir Horace Plunkett soon after the Black-and-Tans had performed most of their infamous work, but any decent person would infinitely prefer to be Sir Horace with his burnt creameries than Mr. Lloyd George with his burnt principles.

to devote himself exclusively to his mystical and poetical writings; but just as Mazzini felt himself compelled to sacrifice his heart's desire, the life of a man of letters, in order to devote himself to a political career which was distasteful to him, so "A. E." felt compelled to hitch his star to Sir Horace Plunkett's wagon, and for many years now he has preached, week after week, the gospel of co-operation to Irish farmers when he would, perhaps, have preferred exclusively to tell stories of the ancient gods and heroes.

## IV

But the Co-operative Movement did not absorb the whole of his energies. He is as many-sided as William Morris was, almost as many-sided as Leonardo da Vinci. His work on the *Irish Homestead* would seem to be sufficient to employ all the vitality of a healthy, active man, but "A. E." cannot be contained within the pages of a weekly review, and so, while writing four or five pages every week of the finest journalism to be found in Great Britain or Ireland, he has also produced seven remarkable books and painted many

pictures, engaged in political and economic controversy, and sat as a member of the Irish Convention which endeavoured, in 1917, to discover a solution of the Irish Problem. In a strange and, to me, incomprehensible book, called "The Candle of Vision," he has wrought his mysticism to such a pitch of practicality that he is able to offer his readers an alphabet with which to interpret the language of the Gods! It manifests itself in some of his pictures, where strange, luminous and brightly-coloured creatures are seen shining in some ordinary landscape, creatures that seemed to me, when I first saw them, akin to Red Indians. In everything that he writes and does, there is a consciousness of some spiritual presence, not the spiritual presence of the Christian theology, but of the Pagan Legends. One night, in his house in Dublin, I drew the attention of a lady to one of his pictures, a dark landscape, in the centre of which a very brilliant and beautiful creature was dancing. "A. E." turned to us and said, "That's the one I saw!" and I remembered the story I had been told earlier in the evening, that he saw fairies, that he actually took penny tram-rides from Dublin to go up into the mountains to see the

fairies! I do not remember what the lady said, but I remember that she looked exceedingly astonished, and, indeed, I myself felt some astonishment. If Mr. Yeats had said that he had seen a fairy, I should have smiled indulgently and should neither have believed that he had seen one nor that he himself believed that he had seen one. But while I do not believe that "A. E." saw a fairy, otherwise than in his imagination, I am certain that he believes he saw one, not as a creature of the mind, but as one having flesh and blood. He claims no peculiar merit for himself in seeing visions. "There is no personal virtue in me," he writes in "The Candle of Vision," "other than this that I followed a path all may travel but on which few do journey." He tells his readers how they, too, if they have the wish, may see the things which he has seen, and he gives descriptions of some of his visions. People as incredulous as I am can very easily dispose of "A. E.'s" visions as the fantasies of a man suffering perhaps from inadequate nourishment—for "A. E." was careless about his meals in those days—just as the visions of St. Theresa and St. Catherine of Sienna may be explained by the feverishness of mind that comes

to people who are starving themselves or are suffering from neurosis. Here is an account of one of his visions. You are to understand that it is not a dream such as you and I have when we are asleep, but something seen by a man who is awake at broad of day, something actual, something that you who read this might also see if you were to follow the path on which he has travelled:

So did I feel one warm summer day lying idly on the hillside, not then thinking of anything but the sunlight, and how sweet it was to drowse there, when, suddenly, I felt a fiery heart throb, and knew it was personal and intimate, and started with every sense dilated and intent, and turned inwards, and I heard first a music as of bells going away, away into that wonderous underland whither, as legend relates, the Danaan gods withdraw; and then the heart of the hills was opened to me, and I knew there was no hill for those who were there, and they were unconscious of the ponderous mountain piled above the palaces of light, and the winds were sparkling and diamond clear, yet full of color as an opal, as they glittered through the valley, and I knew the Golden Age was all about me, and it was we who had been blind to it but that it had never passed away from the world.

The Golden Age is here, at this moment, and all the noble creatures who filled it with chivalry

and beauty are crowding about us. We have only to open our eyes and we shall see! . . .

Once, suddenly, I found myself on some remote plain or steppe, and heard unearthly chimes pealing passionately from I know not what far steeples. The earth-breath streamed from the furrows to the glowing heavens. Overhead the birds flew round and round crying their incomprehensible cries, as if they were maddened, and knew not where to nestle, and had dreams of some more enraptured rest in a diviner home. I could see a ploughman lift himself from his obscure toil and stand with lit eyes as if he too had been fire-smitten and was caught into heaven as I was, and knew for that moment he was a god.

It is very vague, the disbeliever feels, and there is nothing in it to make one accept it as a vision of a thing actually seen, rather than fancied; but there can be no doubt of the intensity with which "A. E." believes in the actuality of it. These visions form the foundation of his political and economic faith. He advocates co-operative enterprise because he believes in his visions as actual happenings. In a poem, called "Earth Breath," he says:

From the cool and dark-lipped furrows breathes a dim delight

Through the woodland's purple plumage to the
diamond night.
Aureoles of joy encircle every blade of grass
Where the dew-fed creatures silent and enraptured
pass.
And the restless ploughman pauses, turns, and,
wondering,
Deep beneath his rustic habit finds himself a king.

This verse is obviously a poetical account of the experience he underwent "on some remote plain or steppe," and the final couplet of it gives the explanation of his belief in democracy. If he had no faith in the god in man, if he were not certain that "the restless ploughman . . . deep beneath his rustic habit finds himself a king," he would probably offer his allegiance to autocracy and believe in government by a caste; but since he has seen visions and is convinced that there is a god in man, he cannot be other than a democrat. All his political strivings have been directed towards making this "a society where people will be at harmony in their economic life," as he writes in "The National Being," and "will readily listen to different opinions from their own, will not turn sour faces on those who do not think as they do, but will, by reason and sympathy, comprehend

each other, and come at last, through sympathy and affection, to a balancing of their diversities, as in that multitudinous diversity which is the universe, powers and dominions and elements are balanced, and are guided harmoniously by the Shepherd of the Ages." Whether such a world, balanced in that way, can be rightly described as a democracy is not a matter on which I offer any opinion here, though it seems to me to be a very long way from what the common man considers a democracy to be.

## V

It is when we come to connect his visions and the beliefs he derives from them with the actual circumstances in which we find ourselves that we begin to be most dubious. "National ideals," he says in "The National Being," "are the possession of a few people only." That is an argument for aristocracy.

Yet we must spread them in wide commonalty over Ireland if we are to create a civilisation worthy of our hopes and our ages of struggle and sacrifice to attain the power to build. We must spread them in wide commonalty because it is certain that democracy will prevail in Ireland. The aristocratic classes with traditions of

government, the manufacturing classes with economic experience, will alike be secondary in Ireland to the small farmers and the wage-earners in the towns. We must rely on the ideas common among our people, and on their power to discern among their countrymen the aristocracy of character and intellect.

With the deletion of the word "Ireland" and the substitution of the word "America," that quotation might stand just as effective for the United States as for Ireland. Why is it certain that democracy will prevail in Ireland? Because the small farmers and the wage-earners in the towns will take precedence over the aristocracy and the manufacturing classes! I do not follow that argument. I have seen nothing in England or America or Ireland or France to convince me that if the small farmers and the wage-earners in the towns were authoritative they would be any more democratic than the aristocratic or the manufacturing classes. I have seen much to make me feel certain that they will use their authority as implacably in their own interests as any aristocrat or manufacturer ever used or ever will use his. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in his book, "Irish Impressions," produces this argument in favour of peasant proprietorship:

It may be that international Israel will launch against us out of the East an insane simplification of the unity of Man, as Islam once launched out of the East an insane simplification of the unity of God. If it be so, it is where property is well distributed that it will be well defended. The post of honor will be with those who fight in very truth for their own land.

It is indisputable that a peasant will fight for his own land, the tiny portion which he owns and cultivates, but will he fight for another man's land when that man is unjustly to be bereft of it? There is nothing meritable in a man who fights for his own goods and lands, nor does it seem to me that a peasant will fight for his potato-patch with any greater determination than a share holder in a railroad will fight for the interest on his capital. There certainly is not anything more noble or chivalrous in the peasant's desire to keep possession of his means of livelihood than there is in that of the Liberty Bondholder. The test of honour is, not what will you do for yourself, but what will you do for other men? The French peasant proprietors, the Pennsylvania Dutch, the Irish peasant proprietors may offer a guarantee of stability to society, but the offer may carry with it obstinate

reaction and a gross disregard of the rights of those who are not possessors of land. It will not guarantee the landless man against exploitation in the price of food in times of war and necessity. It offers singularly little hope that "national ideals" will be spread in wide commonalty, if the peasants can help it. "A. E." will urge, perhaps, that while "national ideals are the possession of a few people only," they may be spread in wide commonalty if the "few people" will make the effort to spread them. The soil lies ready for the seed. But what is there in human affairs to justify any man in assuming that the mass of men are likely to be long-suffering in idealism? Is it not a fact of human nature that even when the multitude has been stirred to some act of exaltation, the staying power of the multitude has not been sufficient to maintain the exalted mood long enough to render the reactionaries hopeless? Where are the generous ideals of 1914 now? Has not the war that was to end war made war seem more probable? Is not the world at this moment suffering to the point of distraction because the multitude cannot live up to its own ideals long enough to make them practical? "The gods departed," says "A. E.",

"the half-gods also, hero and saint after that, and we [i. e. the Irish people] have dwindled down to a petty peasant nationality, rural and urban life alike mean in their externals." But he does not despair. "Yet the cavalcade, for all its tattered habiliments, has not lost spiritual dignity." And he hopes "the incorruptible atom" in us will make us great again. Divine optimism, but what is there in peasant society to justify it?

## VI

And here I make a wide digression to discourse on nationalism and peasant states. The world conspires to believe that the spirit of nationality is a desirable one, filling men with the purest ideals; but we begin to realize now that the spirit of nationality, while it has animated many noble men and brought them to a condition of extraordinary selflessness, more often reduces a race to a state of mean brutality and insufferable smugness. The self-satisfaction of a Sinn Feiner is as sickening as the ruffianly behaviour of a Black-and-Tan, and the outrages committed by the former are more despicable than the outrages of the lat-

ter, because the Black-and-Tan makes no pretences about himself, whereas the Sinn Feiner covers his blackguardly behaviour with a cloak of virtuous nationalism and high ideals. What is there to choose between the Sinn Feiners who seized an old man of seventy and dragged him from a tram-car in Dublin and murdered him in the presence of terrorized Irishmen (not one of whom had the common pluck to risk his life in an effort to save him) and the Black-and-Tans who dragged the Mayor of Limerick from his bed and brutally murdered him? What is there to choose between the noble-minded Sinn Feiners who took old Mrs. Lindsay, a woman of more than seventy years, and shot her and her aged servant dead because she had done what any spirited woman would do, warned soldiers who were on her side, that they were walking into an ambush—what is there to choose between them and the Orangemen who threw bombs into the midst of little Catholic children playing games in Belfast? What is there to choose between the Sinn Feiners who murdered four sick men (one of them dying of pleurisy) in their beds in a Galway hospital and the Orangemen who murdered the McMahon family in Belfast? Very little. If one

side is more condemnable than the other, it is those who, professing noble motives, practice foul deeds. One may, perhaps, find excuses for the evil acts of men whose minds are inflamed with patriotic emotions which cannot be found for a civilized government committing similar deeds of atrocity. Murder by the former may be less reprehensible than murder by the latter, but the difference between them is too slight to be worthy of consideration. Murder remains murder, whether it be done for imperial or national purposes, and I confess to feeling more respect for the plain Black-and-Tan, making no bones about his brutality and his murders, than I do for the Sinn Feiner who commits crimes and calls them acts of virtue. "A. E.'s" restless ploughman may pause and turn and wonder, but is more likely to find himself, "deep beneath his rustic habit" a Sinn Fein gunman than "a king." I do not know how "the incorruptible atom" is to be developed in men who have made a virtue of crime and covered up their infamies with hypocrisy; and "A. E." amazingly omits to tell us how it is to be done.

We Irish people—and I am as Irish in my origins and emotions as any man—suffer from the sin

which afflicts all subject peoples: the sin of self-pity; and I desire self-government for Ireland, not because I believe that the Irish people can govern themselves better than the English have governed them—I take leave to doubt that when I remember the achievements of the Irish in America—but because I can see no hope of the Irish people acquiring a sense of reality until they have freed themselves from the complacency, the smugness, the self-satisfaction, the self-pity which are inevitable in subject peoples. When they have discovered the truth about themselves, they may be able to govern themselves. And the truth about the Irish people, whether they be Protestant or Catholic, from the North or the South, is that they are a brutal, cruel, greedy, mean and treacherous people who have humbugged the rest of the world into the belief that they are a faithful, generous, high-minded, kindly, noble and tolerant race. We have our virtues, but by our insufferable contentment with ourselves we have made vices of them. Our literature, particularly our modern literature, plainly reveals the truth about us. Synge, Padraic Colum, Lennox Robinson, Daniel Corkery, James Joyce—all these have shown us an Irish people

completely false to the world's common belief about them. I remember, when Mr. Robinson's bitter comedy, "The White-Headed Boy," was first performed in London, being asked by an English dramatic critic whether I recognized my countrymen in Mr. Robinson's characters. I said "Yes," and he replied in accents of disgust, "But they're *horrible* people! There isn't one of them for whom any decent person can feel sympathy! . . ." "Exactly," I said. And what our literature is now revealing, our acts and history have long made clear. We are at the culmination of centuries of oppression and cruel treatment. To the natural treachery and brutality of the Celt must be added the treachery and brutality which are provoked by misgovernment. The broad fact about us is that we have been so accustomed, by nature and by circumstances, to occasions of harsh and violent conduct that we find nothing startling in them, provided we can give them a patriotic gloss. Our satisfaction with ourselves is so intense that we imagine our little efforts in literature to be greater than those of the rest of the world. We prate incessantly about the ancient Gælic literature, but are reluctant to produce the evidence for our boast-

ing. We forget that the Irishmen of distinction in literature, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Wilde, Shaw, Yeats, Moore and Synge, are not Celtic at all, but Anglo-Saxon in origin.* All of them, with the exception of Mr. Moore, are Protestant, and even Mr. Moore became a Protestant. "A. E." himself is an Ulster Protestant with a Scotch name. The O's and the Macs, who are reputed to be compounded of poetry and noble thoughts have furnished the world with little but soldiers, cattle-drivers, Sinn Fein gunmen and Tammany bosses. We have sponged upon the world, and the world is utterly sick of us.

Our absorption in ourselves is so complete that we demand consideration for our academic grievances which rightly belongs to the ruined races of Europe. Ireland is the only country in the world which made a profit out of the War, yet her behaviour during it was that of an hysterical woman who should rush into the presence of a man bleeding to death and exclaim, "My God, I've got toothache!" Millions of Russians are dying of dis-

* Parnell, the greatest political leader the Irish Catholics have ever had, was a Protestant of Anglo-Saxon origin. Like Synge, he belonged to a family which came to Ireland originally from Cheshire in the North of England.

ease and hunger with less complaint than a Sinn Feiner makes about his obsolete language which he cannot speak, will not write and does not wish to learn. Millions of Austrians are without the elementary decencies of life, but they do not whine over their ills as Sinn Feiners whine over ills which they have not got. Snivelling and whining, indeed, are the most obvious characteristics of the modern Irishman, Catholic or Protestant, added to an impudent demand that his affairs shall be treated as of greater consequence than those of the rest of mankind.

To crown all, we are allowing ourselves to be dominated by peasant ideals: the little narrow demands of men who care only for their own interests and not at all for their neighbours'. We have seen how the curse of nationality together with the curse of peasant principles have helped to ruin Europe. When we are asked to believe in "the incorruptible atom" of the peasant, we look to the Balkan States and see a foulness which spread a plague across a continent. When we are told of "the spiritual dignity" of the peasant community, we look to France and see a nation so corrupted with peasant greed and peasant fright that the

Peace Treaty threatens to be a more potent force for war and bloodshed than all the Kaisers that have ever lived put together. And when we are told that the patriotic peasant "deep beneath his rustic habit finds himself a king" we look to Ireland and see young men, masked and armed, seizing old, unarmed men and old, unarmed women and sick and dying men and little children, and brutally murdering them. These be your Gods, O Israel. These be your high-minded patriots, your selfless peasants, your noble army of idealists!

If we are to govern ourselves, we can only hope to do so manfully if we begin by humiliating ourselves before God and man. We have made claims on the world's regard which we are not entitled to make and cannot maintain. If "the incorruptible atom" is in our national being at all—if we are not a foul and cantankerous race destined by Almighty God to perish utterly from the earth because we are unfit to survive—then for each of us the principal purpose of life must be a prolonged process of purification. We have sinned, we have sinned, we have sinned, but we have not repented. We have pretended that our sin was a virtue and have demanded admission to the society

of our betters on the plea that we are their equals, if not their superiors, when in fact we are not fit to be in their company at all; and our task now and for a long time must be the bitter one of acknowledging the truth to ourselves and striving to justify our boasting to other men. We have to rid ourselves of vain-glory and self-pity, of cant and humbug, of cruelty and hatred, of backbiting and slander, of false pride, of whining and snivelling, of corrupt living and a mean religion. There are evil things in our nature and more evil things in our circumstances which we must somehow subdue if we are to come to equality with the civilized races of the world, but they will not be subdued until we have learned to acknowledge facts and have discovered that hatred is a device of the devil whereby men are destroyed and the world is made a wilderness. We can neither live nor let live until we have filled our hearts with love and charity. Nor will there be any hope in our lives until we have abandoned the mean divisions which keep the North Irishman in bitter enmity with the South Irishman. These two are necessary to each other, the first for his stability and judgment and governing ability, the second for his vision and

faith and docility. There are millions of Irishmen or men of Irish origin in the United States, yet no Irish Catholic or man of Irish Catholic origin has risen to Presidency of his country. Three men of Ulster Protestant origin have done this. The Irish Catholic has given corrupt politics to America. He has not given anything else. The Ulster people, the only compact people in Ireland, whose blood has hardly been mingled with other blood in three centuries and more—there is not a drop of English blood in my veins, a claim which cannot easily be maintained by Irishmen south of the Boyne—contemplate the scene in Ireland now with misgiving and astonishment. They, whatever their faults, chose an Irishman for their leader, but the Sinn Feiners could not throw up from among themselves a man to lead them. They chose, first, an Englishman, called Padraic Pearse. They chose second, an American Jew, called De Valera, whose principal adviser is an Englishman, called Erskine Childers, whose domestic urge is his American wife, infatuated with the thought that she is the reincarnation of Joan of Arc. And the Ulstermen, free from dialectical intricacies, listen to the tortured, worn-out sentiments uttered by Mr.

De Valera, not in fear, but in contempt. That long, lean Jew, trained by Jesuits, possessed in double measure of the narrow, uninspired idealism of his race and furnished with the casuistical devotion of his teachers, is an honest man, with cold, humourless, fanatical eyes, whose unreceptive mind guards itself against knowledge by barriers of bigotry, hatred, obstinacy, disbelief and self-deception. He has the dishonesty that is sometimes found in a very honest man, the dishonesty one might expect to find in a man trained in a Jesuit school: for there are few acts of unscrupulousness that he will not commit to achieve the end he devoutly desires. When he was asked on one occasion what his attitude would be to the Ulster people if they refused to give allegiance to an Irish Republic, he replied that he would blast Ulster from his path, unaware seemingly that blasting is a bad business in which more than one party can participate. I put the question to him myself in the Commodore Hotel in New York at a meeting of the League of Free Nations; and his reply was that he would present the Ulster people with these alternatives: they might remain in Ireland under the Republic or they might go out of Ireland al-

together with compensation for their property. It did not occur to Mr. De Valera that of these alternatives, Ulstermen would choose neither. How far he had considered the question of finance involved in schemes of compensation, I do not know, although I suspect his mind to be innocent of much financial knowledge; but I wonder how he would raise the money with which to compensate a single firm in Belfast, that of Harland and Wolff, the shipbuilders, if they elected to build their ships in Southampton; and I wonder still more how he would raise the men and the money to carry on those works after Harland and Wolff had taken themselves away! But such suppositions are idle, for Ulstermen will not let themselves be disturbed in their homes by one who is not their countryman. The story of my family in Ulster is typical of the story of hundreds and thousands of families there. All my forefathers, on my mother's side and my father's side, for three hundred years of which we have record and for a longer period of which we have incomplete records, were born and bred and buried in the County of Down, with the exception of my maternal grandfather who, although born and bred in Down, died and was bur-

ied in America. And we, so indigenous to the soil as that, are bidden to acknowledge Mr. De Valera for our President or clear out of our homes, although Mr. De Valera is an American citizen, born in New York, whose first act, if he were President of the Irish Republic, would have to be one of naturalization! We will see Mr. De Valera damned first. This strange intruder into Irish politics has brought in his trail a terrible procession of young men trained to take life lightly, to listen to no argument but that of the revolver; and the end of that procession is out of sight. It is more easy to train men to take life than it is to train them to preserve it. We cannot say to a man, "Thus far shalt thou kill, but no further!" and those whom we have taught to commit crime in the name of patriotism, may continue to commit crime for personal profit. "And so, to the end of history," as Cæsar says in Mr. Shaw's play "murder shall breed murder, always in the name of right and honour and peace, until the gods are tired of blood and create a race that can understand."

## VII

Sometimes I say to myself that "A. E." has lived too long and too exclusively in Ireland. He is not free from the mush of sentimentality with which Irishmen regard themselves, this everlasting self-congratulation that Irishmen are not as Englishmen, this smug preoccupation with their own virtues and bland disregard of their vices, this eternal denial that they have any demerits. If the Irish people are to recover the dignity and the stature of the gods, they must display god-like qualities or prove that they possess them. It is not sufficient to assert that they possess these qualities, at the same time denying them by nagging continually at their neighbours. I have wished at times that "A. E." could be removed from the atmosphere of adulation which envelopes him in Dublin, and sent, without letters of introduction, on a tour round the world. He has probably travelled less than any other educated man in Ireland. He passes from his home in Rathmines, a suburb of Dublin, to the office of the *Irish Homestead* in Merrion Square, from one centre of adulation to another, with occasional visits to the home of

James Stephens, where he meets the same people that visit him on Sunday nights, or to the Hermetic Society, where he meets them again. He is too fine a spirit to be seriously affected by the paltry gabble of the third-rate minds he encounters on most occasions in Dublin, and perhaps it hardly matters that he seldom leaves Dublin and hardly ever leaves Ireland; but even so rare a man as "A. E." must suffer contraction within the narrow limits of Dublin. He has resources that few men possess: a quiet mind, a vivid faith and the love and respect of very dissimiliar people. He can turn from the consideration of agricultural prices in the *Irish Homestead* to the esoteric alphabet with which he speaks to the Gods, or he can go off to the mountains of Donegal and make pictures. When painting no longer delights him, he can spend his nights and days in making poems. He is extravagantly generous to young writers, giving greater praise to them sometimes than they deserve, giving less of criticism than is necessary. There are minor poets in Dublin, authors of thin books of thin verse, who have persuaded themselves, because of "A. E's." praise, that they are more meritable than they are. There are people in Dub-

lin who seem to believe that Ireland has produced a greater literature than England and will denounce you as a traitor to your country if you protest that she cannot show poets of the stature of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson, with the exception of Mr. Yeats. I am the sort of patriot who would like to see his country raise herself to the level of other countries, but I am not the sort of patriot who will pretend that she is on the level of England and France and Germany when, in fact, she is far below it. "A. E." is not entirely free from blame for this. He could have given Ireland a sense of proportion, had he cared to do so.

## VIII

I have a picture by "A. E." of an ascending road on the side of a mountain. There is rain in the air, and the road has a lonely, unfrequented look. Yet, though there is no living creature visible in the picture, Life fills it. I feel sometimes when I sit back in my chair and look at "The Mountain Road" that there are divine beings behind the

bushes, that if I could only climb up that road and turn the corner of the mountain, I should come upon the Golden Age. Is it not ungracious to make complaint, even if the complaint be a slight one, of a man who can make the invisible world so powerfully felt as that? And if he persuades me, by nature sceptical, almost to believe in the Shining Ones, how much more strong must his influence be on those who are eager to believe! When the evil temper which possesses Ireland at this moment has subsided, the fine temper of "A. E." will rise again and call Irishmen to a kindlier mood. The little town of Lurgan, in which he was born, is notorious in Ulster for the harshness of its religious dissensions. A base bigotry flourishes there. It is in the nature of things that from a place of great bitterness should have come a man of reconciliation, bidding Catholic and Protestant to meet, not in Geneva or in Rome, but on the holy hills of Ireland, under the protection of the ancient gods.

# ARNOLD BENNETT

## I

One night, some years before the outbreak of the European War, I arrived in the town of Hanley in the County of Stafford in the midlands of England to deliver a lecture on some subject, the name of which I do not now remember, although I suspect it was connected with the general improvement of mankind. I had accepted the invitation to lecture in Hanley, not because I had anything of importance to say to its inhabitants, but because I had lately read "The Old Wives' Tale" by Mr. Arnold Bennett, and was eager to see the place and the people from which that great book had sprung. My recollections of the visit are very vague now, but I remember that my host, a man of serious mind, a little over-weighted, perhaps, by the troubles of the universe, took me for a walk on Sunday morning through some of "the Five Towns," in the course of which he displayed

much knowledge of the topography of Mr. Bennett's books without displaying much knowledge of the books themselves. He informed me that the real name of "Trafalgar Road" in "The Old Wives' Tale" is "Waterloo Road" and that the fictitious name of Hanley is "Hanbridge." He speculated incuriously on the oddness which had caused Mr. Bennett to alter real names in this palpable manner, and ended his discourse with the statement that he seldom read novels (which he persisted in calling "Works of Fiction") being more inclined to the study of serious books. I learned that he read chiefly in the writings of sociologists and political economists and similar serious persons. I suggested to him that he might more profitably read novels than sociological books if he wished to discover something about human character. He was a polite and kindly man, and he did not abruptly tell me of my folly, but I could see that he considered me to be a fool or, at best, a flippant person, and I am sure that had he not been my host he would not have troubled to attend my lecture that evening. He smiled in the benign way men have when they abstain from expressing their frank opinion, as he

listened to me saying that he would find in novels a greater fund of information about human nature than he could hope to find in all the works that all the sociologists in the world have written. Men of affairs, I said, spend their lives in writing ponderous volumes on society which are out-of-date as soon as they are published, whereas the novel or the play of a man of genius remains true for ever. Henry Fielding and Adam Smith were contemporaries, but I imagine few will deny that there is more durable stuff, stuff more continuously applicable to human concerns, in "Tom Jones" than there is in "The Wealth of Nations." But my friend would have none of this, and seemed to think that any man who spent time in reading Fielding's novel which might be spent in reading Adam Smith was shamefully misusing his mind. He led me, I remember, through much of the territory which is generically known as "the Five Towns." I saw the Square in which the Baineses lived, and was told that although Mr. Bennett called it "St. Luke's Square" in "The Old Wives' Tale," the local authorities preferred to call it after St. John. So great was the influence of the novel upon me that when I peered through the window of the shop in

which, so I was told, Constance and Sophia Baines were born, I almost expected to see the half-heroic figure of Samuel Povey behind the counter or to meet the cold, un-human glance of that frozen spinster, Miss Marie Insull, who once, and once only, displayed signs of human emotion—on the occasion when Mr. Critchlow brought her into the presence of the widowed Constance to announce his betrothal to her:

> The dog had leisurely strolled forward to inspect the edges of the fiancé's trousers. Miss Insull summoned the animal with a noise of the fingers, and then bent down and caressed it. A strange gesture proving the validity of Charles Critchlow's discovery that in Maria Insul a human being was buried.

My host led me up stony streets, in which every sort of domestic architecture was visible—for "the Five Towns" are so independent that even in the workmen's houses there is no uniformity of style or harmony of design, a fact which makes, not for a pleasing diversity, but for shapelessness and incoherence—and pointed to places in the ground where, so he said, the earth had opened, owing to underground operations, and swallowed whosoever should happen to be passing over it. There was

a story of a man who had set forth in the morning to go to his work, but, before he had travelled many yards from his home, was suddenly consumed by the opening earth and was never seen again. I will admit that I trod those streets thereafter with trepidation and considerable care! I had begun to tire of the ugly houses with their insufferable architecture, and of the grime caused by innumerable chimneys emitting thick, black smoke, when I was led up a steep street at the top of which I was told to halt and gaze about me. I saw the whole of "the Five Towns" and much of the surrounding country spread out like the kingdoms of the world and realized how strangely moving such a scene can be because of its suggestion of human presences. It was not without beauty, in spite of the gloom of an industrial area, but it impressed me most by its air of effort and power and achievement. I became conscious of the activities of men and women, of great labours, of confused strivings out of which some human need is satisfied, and I came away, as I always come away from such sights, immensely impressed by human organization and very satisfied with great machines. When we had descended from that high street and had

walked elsewhere, I found myself suddenly confronting a railway station on which I saw the romantic name of ETRURIA.

## II

Etruria, the country of the Etruscans in Italy, was, I suppose, a very different place from Etruria, the small town between Hanley and Burslem ("Hanbridge" and "Bursley") where Josiah Wedgwood founded his pottery in the eighteenth century, but the spirit which produced the Etruscan ceramics was not dissimilar from the spirit which produces the famous Wedgwood ware; and I thought to myself as I looked at the romantic name of that grimy-looking town in Staffordshire that I had stumbled on the secret of Mr. Bennett. Underneath the plain appearance of the pottery town, there is a spirit which has persisted in the production of beautiful things for the best part of two centuries, a spirit so much in love with delicate ware that it calls an unsightly town by the name of an ancient and reputedly beautiful one; and underneath the hard and fact-ridden style of Mr. Bennett there is an ineradicable desire for romance. I

said of him once that he fights the battles of the romantic with the weapons of the realist, and that description seems to me to be strictly accurate. Mr. Bennett mingles, even in his Christian names, the gritty and the graceful in a way that is singularly characteristic of the people of his district. "Enoch Arnold Bennett" is a combination of names not easily imagined, but it is not more unusual than the combination of Etruria and Staffordshire, of lovely ceramics and "the Five Towns." Mr. Bennett has many times been charged with addiction to dusty realism, a dull love of facts. His critics say of him, after reading such a book as "Your United States," that he must have spent his time on the liner in which he went to America in counting the rivets in her plates for the sheer love of counting them, and they conclude that he is a materialist because of his interest in numbers and in things. They even complain of him that he is infatuated with largeness, just as Queen Victoria was, and that he imagines a thing to be good when it is merely big. This is undiscerning criticism. It is as if a child were charged with being a disciple of Haeckel because it thinks that ten things are more wonderful than one thing. We

may think that Mr. Bennett is a fact-ridden modern, incapable of romance, because he inordinately admires electricity, but to do so is to announce ourselves as dunderheads for not discovering that his love of electricity is the Romantic's love of the Magic Lamp! How easily most of us are dissuaded from our faith in romantic things! We are in ecstasies when we hear of St. Francis of Assisi preaching to the fishes and the birds and addressing them as little brothers, but we are horribly shocked and humiliated when Mr. Bernard Shaw makes the mad priest in "John Bull's Other Island" speak of a pig as our little brother! There is prettiness in the community of men and birds, even of men and the smaller fish, but pigs—PORK! ! We find romance in the spectacle of a man rubbing a dirty lantern with his fingers in order to summon up a serving genie, but cannot perceive the greater romance found by Mr. Bennett in the spectacle of a man pressing a switch and illuminating a room with power drawn by wires from a station many miles away! We are enchanted with the thought of transport on Magic Carpets, but unmoved by the thought that presently great ships will be guided into New York

Harbour, not by pilots, but by means of wireless telegraphy! Some dullards have exclaimed despairingly of Mr. Bennett because of what they called his trivial and commonplace interests as revealed in that enthralling book, "Things That Have Interested Me," failing utterly to discern that it is his interest in these things which is so infallible a sign of his zest for life. Any one can be interested in the Rocky Mountains, but it is only a superbly romantic man who can be absorbed in Tarrytown. There is not anything in the round world, made by God or by man, which does not interest Mr. Bennett. Familiarity breeds contempt in most of us, but it does not breed contempt in him. *He never gets used to things.* Most of us are too dull of mind, too destitute of imagination to feel interest or astonishment unless we are abruptly confronted with the unusual or the violent, and our capacity for romantic enjoyment is limited and soon exhausted. We would exclaim with astonishment on beholding an eruption of Mount Vesuvius for the first time, but we would exclaim rather less on perceiving the ninety-ninth eruption. Mr. Bennett would experience as much excitement on the ninety-ninth occasion as he would on the first.

Nothing less than an earthquake is necessary to stir some of us, but Mr. Bennett can be stirred by the sight of a taxicab. The genesis of "The Old Wives' Tale," as described in the preface to one of the later editions, is a clear illustration of his romantic possession:

In the autumn of 1903 [he writes], I used to dine frequently in a restaurant in the Rue de Clichy, Paris. Here were, among others, two waitresses that attracted my attention. One was a beautiful, pale young girl, to whom I never spoke, for she was employed far away from the table I affected. The other, a stout, middle-aged, managing Breton woman, had sole command over my table and me, and gradually she began to assume such a maternal tone towards me that I saw I should be compelled to leave that restaurant. If I was absent for a couple of nights running she would reproach me sharply: "What! you are unfaithful to me?" Once when I complained about some French beans, she informed me roundly that "French beans were a subject which I did not understand. . . . "

I break the quotation here to exclaim at the obtuseness of that Breton woman who, in the course of her management of Mr. Bennett, failed to discover that he loves to regard himself as an authority on such matters as French beans. There

is a kind of romantic pride which makes some men believe that they know the one place in a city where the best brand of a particular article is to be purchased. Mr. Bennett has that pride. The heaviness of the Breton's blow to it can be imagined after reading the next sentence in the passage from which I am making the quotation:

I then decided to be eternally unfaithful to her, and I abandoned the restaurant. A few nights before the final parting an old woman came into the restaurant to dine. She was fat, shapeless, ugly and grotesque. She had a ridiculous voice and ridiculous gestures. It was easy to see that she lived alone, and that in the long lapse of years she had developed the kind of peculiarity which induces guffaws among the thoughtless. She was burdened with a lot of small parcels which she kept dropping. She chose one seat; and then, not liking it, chose another; and then another. In a few moments she had the whole restaurant laughing at her. That my middle-aged Breton should laugh was indifferent to me, but I was pained to see a coarse grimace of giggling on the pale face of the beautiful young waitress to whom I had never spoken. I reflected, concerning the grotesque diner: This woman was once young, slim, perhaps beautiful; certainly free from these ridiculous mannerisms. Very probably she is unconscious of her singularities. Her case is a tragedy. One ought to be able

to make a heartrending novel out of the history of a woman such as she. Every stout, ageing woman is not grotesque—far from it!—but there is an extreme pathos in the mere fact that every stout, ageing woman was once a young girl with the unique charm of youth in her form and movements and in her mind. And the fact that the change from the young girl to the stout, ageing woman is made up of an infinite number of infinitesimal changes, each unperceived by her, only intensifies the pathos. It was at that instant that I was visited by the idea of writing the book which ultimately became "The Old Wives' Tale." . . .

## III

In that passage there is revealed much, I think, of Mr. Bennett's character and spirit. He dislikes the sensation of being managed because he likes the sensation of managing. The Breton woman could have won him to faithful service for ever if she had deferred to him in the matter of French beans, and who knows what tricks of duplicity she could have played upon him had she stooped to guile? But she wounded him in his pride when she bluntly told him that her judgment on beans was sounder than his, and thus lost the custom of the most interesting of her

diners. The first fact, therefore, that one discovers in this passage is that Mr. Bennett has a profound respect for his own opinion: he feels pretty sure of himself. This may be considered to be a sign of conceit, but that consideration is not necessarily true. It could only be a sign of conceit if Mr. Bennett's respect for his own opinion were misplaced, and there is nothing in his record to show that it is misplaced. There is, on the contrary, much to show that it is placed with the utmost propriety. He has done many of the things which he said he would do, and has done them exceedingly well. If all of us could have faith in ourselves with as much justification as Mr. Bennett has faith in himself, we would do well to practice our faith with fervour. The second fact about Mr. Bennett which is revealed by this passage is the romantic nature of him, but before I discuss it, I wish to point out a third and minor fact which is something of a flaw in him, not an important flaw, but one which must be remembered by his admirers. It is his occasional tendency to let his romanticism degenerate into sentimentality. Observe how he seems to have romanced about the pale and beautiful waitress to whom he never

spoke, how he assumes that because she is beautiful she must also be generous and sympathetic and kindly, with what dismay he discovers that, just as a man can smile and smile and be a villain, so a woman can be pale and beautiful, and yet be as cruel or lacking in perception as the ruddiest and least lovely of her sex. He declares, indeed, that he quitted the restaurant in the Rue de Clichy because of the insolence of the Breton woman who disputed his authority on beans, but may he not be deceiving himself, may he not in fact have quitted that place because his illusion about the beautiful, pale young waitress was shattered by her coarse grimaces, her unkindly giggles? After all, it is easy enough to live with those who will not accept our estimate of ourselves, but how hard it is to live with lost beliefs. One of the most painful things about shell-shock cases resulting in mental derangement is that the patient seems to loathe most those whom he formerly loved most, and here in England many of us know of pitiful women who dare not go to see their unbalanced husbands because the mere sight of them throws the unhappy men into paroxysms of rage and anguish! . . .

But it is when we come to consider Mr.

Bennett's attitude towards the foolish old woman who changed her seat and dropped her parcels so often in the restaurant in the Rue de Clichy that we discover his chief characteristic. If he were the fact-ridden realist that some of his critics pronounce him to be, he could not possibly have perceived in that old woman, "fat, shapeless, ugly and grotesque," the lineaments of a girl, "young, slim, perhaps beautiful; certainly free from these ridiculous mannerisms." A fact-ridden realist might not have joined in the laughter of the Breton woman and the giggling pale waitress, but he would have judged the old woman with harsh contempt, more intolerable even than mocking laughter, and he would have turned away from her in irritation and disgust because of her inefficiency, her clumsiness, her indecision, her displeasing exterior. At best, he would have seen her solely as a fat, ugly and grotesque person who had always been incompetent, fat, ugly and grotesque. But Mr. Bennett, incorrigibly romantic, regarding her closely and with kindliness, insists that beneath the hulk of her body there is a soul, that the too, too solid flesh once wore "the feature of blown youth," even as Ophelia found

it in Hamlet! She may not be beautiful now, he tells himself, but how beautiful may she not once have been. That is the spirit of romance. It is a certain sign of the romantic in a man that he will not permit himself to be bluffed by appearances when appearances are bad, although he may often be bluffed by them when they are good. Mr. Bennett was not deceived by the old woman's looks, but he was terribly deceived by the looks of the pale, young waitress, and it is true of him, I think, that he is very easily deceived by youth, to which he is uncommonly generous. Observe how he shows his willingness to be deceived by youth in the passage which I have quoted. He tells himself that the old woman was once "young, slim, perhaps beautiful," which is likely enough, but he goes on, not romantically, but sentimentally, to add, that she was "certainly free from these ridiculous mannerisms." Now, there is no warrant in human experience for such an assumption. I am prepared to believe that an old woman, "fat, shapeless, ugly and grotesque" was once "slim, perhaps beautiful," but I am not prepared to believe that an indecisive, footling old woman was, in her girlhood, any other than indecisive and

footling. We do not change our natures to that extent as we grow older unless we lose our wits or suffer gravely in health, and the tragedy of old age is that habits and mannerisms which are charming and attractive in youth are merely silly and annoying in age. We are amused by the violent opinions of a clever young man of twenty, inclined even to applaud him for holding them because they are significant of an active and developing mind, but they are less amusing to us and win less applause if they are still being expressed by him when he is thirty. We cease altogether to applaud or be amused when we hear him still at them when he is forty. We no longer describe him as a clever young man, but a damned fool. No one has any right to be a clever young man all his life. The law should forbid any one to be a clever young man after the age of twenty-seven. The world is entitled to demand that its clever young men shall grow up and achieve some sort of sanity and right judgment by the age of thirty, and if they refuse to grow up, then they are not free to complain if the world revises its judgment on them and inexorably thrusts them from its regard. Mr. Bennett's old woman dropped

her parcels and changed her seat just as frequently in her youth as she did on that evening when he saw her in the Rue de Clichy, but she was young and perhaps pretty then, and people forgave her for her footling ways because of her youthfulness and in the hope that someday she would acquire steadiness of character and control over her packages. I think I can give a fairly accurate description of that old woman when she was a girl. She was always late for everything, but her demure ways and a sort of foal-like clumsiness about her made men willing to wait and be gracious about it. She always remembered at the last moment nineteen different things which she had forgotten to do, which must immediately be done, which inevitably caused greater delay. She could never find her railway ticket when the inspector came round to examine it and frequently held up trains while every one in her carriage hunted high and low for it. She persistently dropped her gloves, her handkerchief and her vanity-bag or left them behind her wherever she went. She never went out of doors without losing something. She never had any small change, and invariably tendered a ten-dollar bill, when buying a ten-cent news-

paper, in the fond belief that the clerk at the news stand or even the boy in the street was certain to have plenty of change and be all too eager to oblige her. She always got on to the wrong train or trolley-car and did not discover her mistake until too late to dismount from it! . . . But she succeeded in putting over that sort of fatuous behaviour on the strength of her youth and prettiness; and men, who would go raving mad if they had to live with a middle-aged or elderly woman of such habits, readily excused her imbecilities because they were those of youth.

I wondered often, when I was in America, why I saw so many old or middle-aged husbands with girl-wives. People told me that the cost of living is so high in America that young men cannot afford to marry young girls, but must either marry older and richer women or refrain from marriage until they are middle-aged. Young women, so I was told, must marry the elderly and the bald, the slack and the flabby because, otherwise, they cannot hope for a good time until they are no longer of an age to enjoy it. I do not much esteem young women who refuse the great adventure of marriage with young, poor men in order that they may have

a good time with unenthusiastic, tamed and middle-aged men, especially when I remember that a good time in such circumstances means only a fatly comfortable one, being well-fed, well-housed and well-clothed without ever having had the fun of fighting for such comforts. But I am not entirely convinced by the arguments which were put to me in explanation of this singular and unnatural conjunction of the young and the middle-aged. There may be truth in the statement that American girls marry elderly men for the comfort they receive, but I doubt whether the elderly men marry for that reason. I am very certain that such marriages are made because the men are romantic and will not believe that the young girl's "charming ways" will not be retained by her when she is no longer young. The plain and undeniable fact is that elderly men marry girls because they cannot believe that a girl who has foolish habits will not cease to have them when she is older. The romantic is a man who is everlastingly hoping for the best, everlastingly striving to obtain the best. A romantic realist is a man who, while striving for the best, knows that he may only obtain the worst. The sentimentalist is a man who removes

himself from the region of reality and refuses to admit that there is a worst, who insists that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Mr. Arnold Bennett is a romantic realist, with a slight tendency towards sentimentalism.

## IV

His romantic realism seems to plunge desperately into sentimentalism when he contemplates very old age and death. Dr. Johnson had a strange horror of death, "so much so, Sir," as he said to Boswell, "that the whole of life is but keeping away the thoughts of it." But he achieved quietness of mind when his end came and his last recorded words were of a benignant character. "God bless you, my dear!" he said to Miss Morris, forbidden by his faithful negro servant, Francis, to come nearer to his bed than the outer room. Mr. Bennett seldom, if ever, permits his very old people to die placidly. Their disappointments press hardly upon them, if they are not prevented from remembering them by senility or gross disease. Paralysis claims many of them. Age does not beautify them nor bring peace to them, nor do

they face their end with undiminished heads. He is remarkably consistent in this view of old age and death, and perhaps it is natural that he should regard it so gloomily when one remembers how completely he is enthralled by youth. But his view is an unbalanced one.

Old age is not always graceless and crabbed and unlovely. Such an old man as Mr. Thomas Hardy has a grace and quietness and courage discoverable only in those who have endured many things but have not been conquered by them. Mr. Bennett, however, looks upon age as a calamity which must, indeed, happen to all of us, if we live long enough, but cannot possibly be mitigated.

He is able to detect the "young, slim, perhaps beautiful" girl in the "fat, shapeless, ugly and grotesque" old woman, but he cannot so easily detect the gracious old man or woman in the boy and girl. I am oppressed sometimes by the thought that if Mr. Bennett had seen the "young, slim, perhaps beautiful" girl, his romantic nature would have let him down, yielding place to his cynicism, and he would have detected the coming wrinkles on her brow, would have seen that her eyes would grow dull, might even have pointed

out her tendency to obesity. "Of course, I should!" Mr. Bennett may retort, "for I am a realist as well as a romantic, and in this case, I should have been right!" And so he would, but the trouble is that, while Mr. Bennett romantically and rightly sees the slim, perhaps beautiful girl in the fat old woman, he always realistically and wrongly sees the fat old woman in the slim young girl! I think that the spirit of "the Five Towns" is entirely responsible for the fact that Mr. Bennett never sees beauty in age. It is a harsh, acquisitive spirit, busy principally in the accumulation of material things (despite the fact that it produces lovely pottery) and inclined to measure a man's worth by the amount of his fortune. The leisurely and gracious things of life are not the immediate or even the ultimate concerns of life in "the Potteries," and old age is likely, in such places, to be harsh and acquisitive. When men and women, who have spent their activities entirely in money-making, reach the age at which they possess much money but are no longer able to employ themselves in its acquisition, they become crabbed, unlovely, mean, for they have no resources. You cannot derive pleasure from

literature or music or painting or any other art when you bring to its consideration only the fag-end of your life. One has seen men who were notorious among their neighbours for their hard work—always engaged in their employment from early morning until late night—seldom, if ever, resting or taking holiday. One has seen these men, after they have retired from business, so helpless without their work to occupy their minds that they steadily declined into a condition of misery which brought about premature death! They lived for one thing, and when that thing was no longer available for them, they perished because they had no other resources and it was too late to acquire any! Mr. Bennett must have seen such men many times during his early years in "the Five Towns" and the pitiful spectacle so impressed his mind that old age has become to him a terrifying thing, a complete debâcle of the brain and energies. This life, this youth, is so wonderful, so full of romantic possibilties, that age and death seem to him merely obscene interruptions of an enthralling spectacle.

## V

Once only, so far as I can discover, did he make a poem. It was published in *The English Review* in the brave days when that magazine was edited by Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer, and since it is singularly characteristic, as a poem ought to be, of its author's outlook on life, I quote it here in full. But first I must affirm my belief that *The English Review*, under the editorship of Mr. Hueffer, was the greatest magazine that this world has ever known. That is a tremendous title to claim for any magazine, but I doubt whether any one, familiar with great magazines, will seriously dispute it. The title of Mr. Bennett's poem is "Town and Country." Here it is:

God made the country, and man made the town.
And so—man made the doctor, God the clown;
God made the mountain, and the ants their hill,
Where grinding servitudes each day fulfil.
God doubtless made the flowers, while in the hive
Unnatural bees against their passions strive.
God made the jackass and the bounding flea;
I render thanks to God that man made me.
Let those who recognize God's shaping power

Here but not there, in tree but not in tower,
In lane and field, but not in street and square,
And in man's work see nothing that is fair—
Bestir their feeble fancy to the old
Conception of a "country" made by God;
Where birds perceive the wickedness of strife
Against the winds, and lead the simple life
Nestless on God's own twigs; and squirrels, free
From carking care, exist through February
On nuts that God has stored. Let them agree
To leave the fields to God for just a year,
And then of God's own harvest make good cheer.

If one were a sentimentalist, one could describe that poem as a sign of a blankly materialistic mind, with a turn for blasphemy, but if one is what one ought to be, a romantic with a sense of reality, it will appear to be a confession of faith in God *and* man.

## VI

Mr. Bennett, of all the men of letters with whom I am acquainted, not even excluding Mr. Shaw, is the most generous and kindly to young people. Mr. Wells likes young people, but his interest in them is curiously impersonal. He likes youth

in a lump, so to speak, rather than youth in the individual, just as he seems to love mankind more than he likes any man. But Mr. Bennett likes *you*, the youth, personally. He is happier on the whole with young people than he is with their elders, and he assiduously seeks their society. He is amused by their extravagances, but not to the extent of sneering at them. He likes youth to be dandiacal, to have an air, to be arrogant, but not to be ill-bred or pretentious or third-rate. In spite of his notable kindness, he can be merciless to humbugs, and stories are told of devastating things said by him to presumptuous persons and fools. The blunt speech of "the Five Towns" is native to his tongue, and he passes judgment without mincing his words. He has a dry sort of wit which is remarkably helped by a slight hesitation in his speech, and his general conversation, without being markedly distinguished, is entertaining and agreeable in a way that is very elusive when put upon paper. It is natural, perhaps, that a man who loves youth so much as he does should have a more potent sense of the present and of the future than of the past, and this accounts for the fact that his books and

pictures are chiefly modern. I imagine that he has a greater number of books and pictures by young authors and painters than any other man of his calibre in England. He loves music, but is not "highbrow" about it, and he has a passion for dancing which threatens now to keep him jigging through ballrooms for the rest of his life. He paints quite charming water-colour pictures, and is so fond of the sea that the surest way in which any one can lose his friendship is to accompany him for a trip on his yacht and be sea-sick during it! He is a keen man of business, and he is full of contempt for the rather sloppy-minded man of letters who allows himself to be worsted in a bargain. Most men of quality are lonely men, oddly isolated in spirit, and Mr. Bennett is not an exception to the rule, but more than his compeers, I think, he is a companionable person in a small group, chiefly because of that romantic interest he has in all things, animate and inanimate. He has a wider knowledge of books than most men of letters. Most men of letters, indeed, are remarkably ignorant of books. And he has the courage, the supreme courage, to do what no other literary man I have ever met has the

courage to do: he keeps a gramophone. He likes the savor of life, and life for him includes the pictures of Corot and the gramophone and French poetry and the novels of George Moore and newspapers and motor-cars and Balzac and Bernard Shaw and the right brand of French beans. How can such a man help being romantic!

## G. K. CHESTERTON

### I

THERE is a legend, much beholden to Shakespeare, that learning and leanness are akin to each other, while dull wits flourish in company with obesity. The curious submission sometimes made by Shakespeare to common prejudices and ignorance, glorified by the name of legend, caused him too often to forget the obligation of the aristocrat to think for himself, and remember only to think with the mob; and the singular fact about this forgetfulness of his is that when he chose to think with the mob, he nearly always did so when the the mob was in the wrong. He preferred the judgment of the street to the judgment of informed minds when he wrote "Richard the Third," and allowed himself to malign that excellent and most capable prince and monarch. Richard was one of the ablest of the kings of England, but Shakespeare, forgetting his obligations to his own

genius, portrays him as a pervert with a mania for blood. He yields to the common view in his references to fat men. Falstaff is fat and flighty and a coward, a drunkard, a braggart and a misleader of young princes, although the prototype of Sir John was himself a man of known courage. Cassius was deemed to think too much because he had a lean and hungry look. Julius Cæsar desired the society of fat men who, presumably, indulged but seldom in thought and never in any that could be called dangerous. Fat men are endowed with but one tolerable virtue: that of good nature; and if any fat men ever enters heaven, it will be because of his equable temper and in spite of his corpulence.

Mr. Chesterton is a fat man. There is a rumour in England that many Americans felt they had been defrauded of their money when they went to hear him lecture lately because he was hardly so fat as they had been led to believe! He certainly is not so bulky now, because of a serious illness, as he was when I first knew him, but in those days he was undeniably an enormous man. And in himself he is a complete refutation of the legend that fat men are dull men. Dr. Johnson

was another fat man whose large flesh covered a large intellect. Dr. Johnson, indeed, was so able a man that, in spite of an incorrigibly lazy character, which kept him abed of mornings when he ought to have been improving the shining hour, he compiled a dictionary with little assistance which, so Frenchmen said, would have engaged the labours of forty French scholars for a long time.

These legends about men of wit and dull men need to be revised. There have been as many fat men of genius as there have been lean men of genius. There have been as many epicurean geniuses as there have been ascetic geniuses. My experience is that men of great mental energy are fonder of their food than many men with torpid minds; and some of the ablest men I know are excessively addicted to the pleasures of the table. Mr. Shaw is a fastidious feeder, with odd likes and dislikes, but no one could say that he is indifferent to what he eats. It is, I think, an ironic commentary on the legend that fat men are lacking in cleverness, that much the cleverest of those who oppose the opinions of the lean Mr. Shaw is the fat Mr. Chesterton.

Mr. Chesterton, was sent into the world by an

All-Just God for the exclusive purpose of saying the opposite to Mr. Shaw. With the most complimentary intention I say that Mr. Chesterton's job in the world is, when Mr. Shaw speaks, to reply, "On the contrary! . . ." He has to restore the balance which Mr. Shaw very vigorously disturbs. Mr. Chesterton is considerably younger than Mr. Shaw, much younger than most people, on seeing him, imagine him to be. He was born in London in 1874. His book on Browning was published when he was twenty-nine, and "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" when he was thirty. The bulk of his work, and certainly the best of it, with the exception of the "Short History of England," was published before he was forty. The bulk, and certainly the best, of Mr. Shaw's work was published after he had passed his fortieth year. A critic comparing the two writers ought to remember that Mr. Shaw's work is mainly that of a mature man, whereas that of Mr. Chesterton is mainly the work of a young man.

## II

Gilbert Keith Chesterton is commonly known as a writer of paradox. He is something of a paradox himself, for he is half-Scotch, half-French, and wholly English. This paradox is not any more startling than the fact that yellow and blue, when mixed together, become green. England is half-way between Scotland and France! He handles paradox very skilfully, but there are times when he imagines he is making a paradox and is only making a pun; and there are other times when he is merely making nonsense. He states in a book called "What's Wrong With the World" that "the prime truth of woman, the universal mother" is "that if a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing badly." That is singular paradox! I can understand a prime truth which declares that a thing is worth doing, even if it be done badly, but I cannot understand a prime truth which seems to make a merit of bad workmanship.

Elsewhere in the same book, he says that "submission to a weak man is discipline. Submission to a strong man is servility." The proper commentary on that paradox can only be made by a

soldier. I can assure Mr. Chesterton that the discipline of a weak man is the nearest approach to tyranny I know, and it flies to pieces in times of great distress. Your strong man can hold thoroughly frightened men to their manhood with a word and a wave of the hand, but your weak man demoralizes them with the fretful tyranny which he calls strength. The submission of strong men to a weak man may be called discipline, but it would be better named self-assurance. But in the field itself, when authority and strength are needed, that weak man is quietly pushed into the background, and the really strong man, although he may be a private soldier, takes command. One can, of course, pick holes in many of Mr. Chesterton's paradoxes in that manner, but it is profitless to do so. Our work now is to discover what is of value in his doctrine and to describe what is unsound in it.

Roughly, one may say that Mr. Chesterton stands for the common man against the very clever man. He believes more in the People than he believes in Particular Persons. As he himself would say, he trusts Man more than he trusts any man, a statement which reads better than it sounds.

He believes in tradition, even in legend, which is the wisdom accumulated by Man, not out of his mind so much as out of his experience. He believes in the institution of private property, provided that the property is widely distributed. In other words, he believes in what is called Peasant Proprietorship. He does not believe in Progress as Mr. Wells, for example, believes in it, and he will tell you very emphatically that the common man was happier in the Middle Ages than he is to-day. There are times when it seems to me that Mr. Chesterton's "common man" is as mythical as the "average man" of the newspapers and the "economic man" of the economists; and I am very dubious about the happiness of the poor people of the Middle Ages. It would be foolish to carry one's doctrine too far, but if there is anything in this theory of Man deriving wisdom from experience, surely it is reasonable to suppose that human beings, having discovered a means of living which ensures some comfort and security to them, will not easily be deprived of it. Mr. Chesterton asks us to believe that the "common" man permitted the rich lord to rob him of his rights almost

in ignorance of the fact that he was being robbed of them. It is just as probable that he was ignorant of them because he never had them.

Mr. Chesterton believes, too, in what he calls "the ancient and universal things" as against what he calls "the modern and specialist things." He has invented a theory which establishes man as the great specialist and woman as the great amateur, and he would keep woman out of the polling-booth, not because the vote is too good for her, but because it is not good enough. He demands that the woman shall stay in the home, not for the Teutonic reason that she is inferior to man and must work in a narrow area, but for the Chestertonic reason that she is capable of more varied work than man and can only find adequate range for her variety in the broad dominions of the home. "Women were not kept at home," he says, "in order to keep them narrow; on the contrary, they were kept home in order to keep them broad." The effort must seem to many persons to have been a singularly unsuccessful one, but Mr. Chesterton will have none of this sophistry. "I do not even pause to deny that woman was a servant; but at least she was a general

servant," he asserts; discovering in her "generalness" a virtue where others would discover only a certainty of incompetence and muddle.

If drudgery only means dreadfully hard work, I admit the woman drudges in the home, as a man might drudge at the Cathedral of Amiens or drudge behind a gun at Trafalgar. But if it means that the hard work is more heavy because it is trifling, colorless and of small import to the soul, then, as I say, I give it up; I do not know what the words mean. To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labors and holidays; to be Whiteley within a certain area, providing toys, boots, sheets, cakes and books; to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners, theology and hygiene—I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman's function is laborous, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness.

I have quoted that extensive passage because it is a good example of Mr. Chesterton's style and his thought. It is a mixture of soundness and unsound-

ness, in which the two things merge so imperceptibly that there is difficulty in distinguishing the one from the other. It is not easy to see why the stenographer, travelling to an office every morning at the same hour by the same underground railway, and typing more or less the same sort of letter for a specified number of hours before she returns every evening by the same underground railway to the home from which she set out in the morning, should be more broad-minded that the woman who stays at home performing a variety of jobs; and perhaps Mr. Chesterton is justified in his faith by the fact that the stenographer is most eager to escape from the office to the home by the way of marriage.

Nevertheless, I suspect that the home is not quite the broadening influence Mr. Chesterton declares it to be, and Mr. Chesterton himself provides me with the ground for my suspicion. To be Queen Elizabeth within a certain area may be enlarging for the mind. To be Whiteley (or Marshal Field, in America) within a certain area may be enlarging for the mind. To be Aristotle within a certain area may be enlarging for the mind. But to be Queen Elizabeth *and* Whiteley *and* Aristotle within

a certain area is paralyzing for the mind. The stenographer who does one thing every day, has time to think of many things: the wife and mother who does many things every day has time to think of nothing. I do not believe that the stenographer, who accepts the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, regards the drudgery of them as an unparalleled opportunity for exhibiting her versatility; and I have observed that the people who are most keen on such "modern and specialist things" as labour-saving devices, are just those women who, in Mr. Chesterton's judgment, should be most reluctant to accept them.

## III

His praise of the "ancient and universal things" at the expense of the "modern and specialist things" leads him to say that

> If a man found a coil of rope in a desert he could at least think of all the things that can be done with a coil of rope; and some of them might be practical. He could tow a boat or lasso a horse. He could play cat's cradle or pick oakum. He could construct a rope-ladder for an eloping heiress, or cord her boxes for a travelling

maiden aunt. He could learn to tie a bow, or he could hang himself. Far otherwise with the unfortunate traveller who should find a telephone in the desert. You can telephone with a telephone: you cannot do anything else with it.

He disparages the hot-water pipe in order to exalt the open fire. He argues that "the ancient and universal things" can be turned to many uses, but that the "modern and specialist things" are strictly limited to one purpose.

There may be much in his argument, though his examples hardly support him, but how much is not apparent. Take the case of the man in the desert who finds a coil of rope, and compare him with the man in the desert who finds a telephone. Mr. Chesterton begs us to observe how happy is the former compared with the latter, but is he one-half so happy? The absorbing passion of a man's life in a desert would be the desire to get out of the desert as quickly as possible. How far would a rope help him to realize his desire? He could not tow a boat or lasso a horse because there would not be any water on which to tow the boat or any horse to lasso. If there were a horse to lasso it would either be wild and unrideable or private

property. He could play at cat's cradle with the rope if it were not a rope at all—if, that is to say it were twine; and perhaps this would help him to pass away the time before he died of starvation. He could pick oakum if he wished to un-rope the rope and had never been to prison to discover what a loathsome job oakum-picking is. But he could not construct a rope-ladder for an eloping heiress or cord her boxes for his travelling maiden aunt, because the eloping heiress would not be eloping in a desert, and his maiden aunt would hardly be packing her trunk in the Sahara. He might be able to tie a bow. He might even be able to hang himself, though that is doubtful, for trees are not prolific in deserts. But I cannot see what comfort he would derive from either of these accomplishments.

To sum up, a man in a desert with nothing but a coil of rope between him and civilization would be in as complete a state of isolation as it would be possible for a man to imagine. How different would be the case of the man in a desert with the despised "modern and specialist" telephone! For he, finding a telephone, would instantly be able to communicate with other people and to

direct them to his rescue. If he were anxious to hang himself, he could more effectively do so in the neighbourhood of a telephone than in the neighbourhood of a coil of rope, for where there are telephones there are generally telegraph-poles!

Even in the case of the open fire and hot-water pipe, as much can be said for the "modern and specialist thing" as can be said for the "ancient and universal thing," and in some instances, more can be said for it. We get a cheerful glow from an open fire that certainly is not to be got from a hot-water pipe; but Mr. Chesterton must have noticed on many occasions that whereas one gets tolerably toasted on one side by an open fire, the other side is usually left cold. Thus a man, on a wintry night, sitting before the fire, may be too warm in front, and half-frozen behind. But a hot-water pipe creates an equable temperature in a room and leaves a man warm on all sides.

## IV

He is a nationalist and therefore opposed to imperialism. His belief in peasant proprietorship flows naturally from his belief in national-

ism. He defends peasant proprietorship in "Irish Impressions" because he believes that a country controlled by peasants will survive long after more majestically-governed nations have declined and fallen:—

> I do not know how far modern Europe really shows a menace of Bolshevism, or how far merely a panic of Capitalism. But I know that if any honest resistance has to be offered to mere robbery, the resistance of Ireland will be the most honest and probably the most important. . . . It is where property is well distributed that it will be well defended. The post of honour will be with those who fight in very truth for their own land.

Now, here we are on very debateable ground, as debateable as his statement that "honour is a luxury for aristocrats, but it is a necessity for hall-porters," which is surely an obscure rendering of the entirely commercial statement that "honesty is the best policy." Honour is not honour when a man uses it merely because it is profitable to him, and I cannot see much virtue in him who fights for his land simply because he owns it. Honour is admirable when it brings not profit but loss to the man who wears it. Virtue is in the man who fights for his country though he does not own an inch of it.

And here I come to my objection to Mr. Chesterton's beloved peasant proprietorship, the cause of my dismay at the thought that my own country of Ireland may soon be controlled by small farmers.

It is true that a peasant will fight desperately for his own piece of land, but he manifests a sturdy reluctance to fight for another man's land; and I cannot understand why Mr. Chesterton regards his determination to hold on to his property as more "honest," or more "honourable" than the determination of a Victory bondholder to get the last cent of interest out of the taxpayers. Peasants, no less than other men, in fact more than other men, have itching palms, and it is sheer sentimentalism to describe as "honest" or "honourable" behaviour in them which is denounced as dishonest and dishonourable in a stockbroker. It is true that Lenin's schemes collapsed completely before the resistance of the Russian peasants, and that his plans for the nationization of everything failed to include the principal thing of all, namely, the land; but Mr. Chesterton will hardly maintain that the Russian peasants had disinterested motives in offering this resistance to Lenin. He may, indeed, insist that their motives were entirely inter-

ested and base his case for the Distributive State, as Mr. Belloc named it, on that very interest. But a nation should be something more than a crowd of peasants digging in the earth for their personal profit, and when Mr. Chesterton commends his peasant proprietors to me, I ask not for the signs of their interested behaviour, but for the signs of their disinterested behaviour. When he tells me that the peasant will fight for his own land, I ask him whether the peasant will fight for his neighbour's land? When he tells me that the Irish peasant will resist the attempts of the Bolshevist to communalize his land, I ask him whether the Irish peasant is equally ready to defend the French peasant from Russian aggression? Mr. Chesterton declares that France had claims on the gatitude of Ireland. Did the Irish peasant farmer remember those claims on his gratitude? Or did he find it more convenient and profitable to ejaculate, "Yah, dirty atheist, go and fight your own battles!" In deriding the idea of empire, Mr. Chesterton says in this book of "Irish Impressions" that "the British combination" is "more lax and liable to schism" than a combination of peasants. I do not believe there is any truth in this state-

ment, particularly when I remember that "the British combination" held together for five years in circumstances that might have been expected to shake it to pieces. Let me give you an example, out of my experience during the War, of the way in which the Imperial idea rallies men to its support to their own loss. While I was being trained to be an officer, I shared a hut with twenty-five other men. Between us, we represented every part of the British Empire. The twenty-six men in that hut included Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen and two Irishmen (one of whom was an Orangeman, and the other, myself, a Home Ruler). In addition to these, there were two Australians, a man from New Zealand, two men from Canada, two from South Africa and a couple of men from South America, one a Spaniard and the other the son of English parents. Many of these men had travelled for thousands of miles at their own expense in order to join the British Army. They were volunteers. I would like to see the community of peasants that would travel ten yards to defend anything but their own personal property, except under compulsion.

When I cited this case to Mr. Chesterton some

time ago, in controversy with him, he replied with characteristic amiability that Serbia was a community of peasants, and that Serbia had fought in the War. When I asked whether Serbia would have fought for Montenegro, he replied that she had done more than that, she had fought for "the wholly invisible bond of all Christendom." But Serbia did nothing of the sort. She fought for herself because she was invaded. That was a perfectly proper thing to do, but there is no comparison between it and the behaviour of men responding at their own cost to the Imperial idea, although many hundreds of miles away from the place of argument and under no compulsion to go to it.

The truth about a peasant civilization is that it is a mean civilization, in which mean virtues compete with mean vices, and the small and local thing is esteemed above the big and worldwide thing. There are many defects in empires, even in one so loosely-bound as the British Empire, but although those who control an empire are often guilty of cruel deeds, there is at least this to be said in their defense, that they honestly believe themselves to be possessed of greater wisdom than those whom they

oppress, and do desire in their stupid fashion to govern them for their good.

On the whole, freedom may be defined as the right to choose; but that definition must obviously be subject to limitations. There is a sort of wild and woolly democrat who believes in the right of uninstructed persons to choose wrong. It is not a right in which I believe. Mr. Chesterton thinks, not without justification, that the common man can choose in a right manner. If his creed were confined to that clause we could accept it with heartiness, but there are times when he seems to think that the common man chooses aright because he is a common man, and he leaves us with the impression that he can never quite forgive Magna Charta because it was won by peers, and not by peasants. He seems not to realize that if Magna Charta had depended upon peasants, it would never have been won.

## V

But he helps us to keep a balance. His service to us is that when we are inclined to run frantically

after the superman, he reminds us of the existence of the common man. If he were not so well-padded with flesh, I should describe him as the skeleton at a feast of supermen, reminding them that even a superman can be a fool.

There are times indeed, when his faith in the common man undergoes a sea-change, and he utters sentiments that might be spoken by Mr. H. L. Mencken, who cannot abide the common mind. In one of his essays, Mr. Chesterton says, "I certainly would much rather share my apartments with a gentleman who though he was God than with a gentleman who thought he was a grasshopper." So would Nietzsche. But I doubt whether the Early Christians would have approved his preference. They, who were ready to pronounce all flesh to be grass, would not have found anything incompatible with their faith in a gentleman who regarded himself as a grasshopper. They would certainly have considered his rival in misapprehension to be a blasphemer. And if Mr. Chesterton would fail to find pleasure in the company of a man who believed himself to be that interesting but monotonous insect, how much less pleasure would he derive from sharing his apart-

ments with a man who believed not only himself, but all men, to be worms?

He is personally the most kindly and agreeable of men, in whom the one virtue commonly ascribed to fat men, that of good nature, is most highly developed. His anger is almost completely impersonal. His pardon is on the heels of his condemnation. The sins of jealously and hatred are unknown to him, and he seems to be without the power of resenting spiteful things done to himself. He said to me on one occasion, "Arnold Bennett says I'm an imbecile!" in the tone of a man who was not in the least annoyed by the statement, but puzzled by the fact that any man should call another one an offensive name. We are all children of the one God, in his belief, even if some of us are Jews, and in some mystical manner he contrives, in his anger, to discriminate between the human being and the thing which the human being does. If ever he is moved to slay a sweater or an international financier or a Prohibitionist, he will do so entirely without prejudice to that person's right to be called a child of God. It is a tribute to the charm of his character and the equability of his temper that his stoutest admirers are

those who most vigorously combat his opinions, and that most of his friends are men who do not share any of his views, except perhaps the only view that matters, the view that an ill deed must be exposed and a wrong put right. He is Don Quixote in the body of Sancho Panza.

# JOHN GALSWORTHY

## I

It is sometimes said that an artist never intrudes his personality into his work and that the great writers of the world have kept themselves so closely to themselves that their readers have never been able to discover anything of their faith or partialities. This is not only untrue, but is also absurd, for how can any man hope to exclude himself from his creations, since without him the creations would not be? There never was a book of any sort which did not in some fashion reveal the nature of its author to discerning readers, and I will personally undertake to give a fairly accurate account of the general character of any author after an attentive reading of all his writings. There are authors, such as Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells, who do not make any pretence of excluding themselves from the notice of their readers: they deliberately force themselves into their books; and the habit has become so much a part of

their nature that they sometimes do it unconsciously. One may say of them, perhaps, that we learn chiefly from their writings what their opinions are, but learn nothing of their characters. But while it is true that we do receive much information about their opinions, it is true also, I think, that they unmistakably reveal themselves, something of the intimate parts of them, to those who closely consider their books. Fielding formally held up the course of his stories in order that he might state his views to his readers, and Dickens and Thackeray followed his example; but all three of them revealed more than their beliefs to their readers—they revealed themselves. Mr. Shaw and Mr. Wells are excellent examples of what may be described as the Direct Revealers—writers who nakedly manifest their opinions and, more or less nakedly, their personalities in their books. The Indirect Revealers are best exemplified in two poets, Shakespeare and John Millington Synge, and one novelist and dramatist, Mr. John Galsworthy. We have very little documentary evidence of Shakespeare's existence, and it is impossible, therefore, to write his biography with the accuracy of detail with which one

is able to record the events of, say, Roosevelt's career; but there is a clear and unmistakable account of his hopes and fears and beliefs and disbeliefs, a most faithful portrait of his character, contained in his poems and plays. How can any one fail to discover behind his work the figure of a grave, fastidious, disdainful and distrustful and solitary man whose spiritual solitude was concealed under an appearance of gregariousness and cheerful living that made him a good companion on most occasions without being excessively popular. Ben Jonson, despite his quarrelsome character, was probably more deeply loved by his contemporaries than Shakespeare was, because Shakespeare had more of reserve and spiritual isolation than Ben had, and was less willing to put faith in the virtue of the crowd; and I imagine that had one interrogated any of Shakespeare's friends, they would have said of him, "Oh, yes, I like William Shakespeare very much! Talks well! He's a good chap, but a little odd . . . queer . . . at times. It isn't easy to make friends with him. He always keeps us at our distance—not deliberately, of course, but in some vague way. He understands us all right, and he takes part in our

revels, but he never completely descends to our level. Now, old Ben . . . he's a good, hearty chap! He is so comradely that we frequently forget he is Ben Jonson and think of him as just one of ourselves. Shakespeare's friendly enough, but we never forget that he is Shakespeare. Sometimes, quite unintentionally, he makes us feel a little common! . . ."

The best biography of John Synge that I have read—and I have read all of them—is contained in his plays and poems. It is impossible to rise from his books without an impression of intense loneliness and unachievable desires, of a man eager to be the hero of romantic exploits, but totally unable to stand up to life and make himself a hero because of some spiritual ineffectiveness, some lack of assertion which results in fumbling and self-distrust; and one goes from the plays and poems to the biographies and is not surprised at reading of his lonely life. How often the word "lonesome" occurs in his writings, and how deeply he insists on the terrors of solitude! Pegeen Mike in the "The Playboy of the Western World" reproves her father for going "over the sands to Kate Cassidy's wake" and leaving her alone in the shebeen:

If I am a queer daughter, it's a queer father'd be leaving me lonesome these twelve hours of dark, and I piling the turf with the dogs barking, and the calves mooing, and my own teeth rattling with the fear.

I imagine that there is some deep personal feeling of Synge's in the speech he puts into the mouth of Christy Mahon in the second act of the same play:

CHRISTY: And isn't it a poor thing to be starting again, and I a lonesome fellow will be looking out on women and girls the way the needy fallen spirits do be looking for the Lord?

PEGEEN: What call have you to be lonesome when there's poor girls walking Mayo in their thousands now?

CHRISTY: It's well you know what call I have. It's well you know it's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog noising before you and a dog noising behind, or drawn to the cities where you'd hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart.

PEGEEN: I'm thinking you're an odd man, Christy Mahon. The oddest walking fellow I ever set my eyes on to this hour to-day.

CHRISTY: What would any be but odd men and they living lonesome in the world?

The scene of all his plays is laid in a lonely place: the last cottage at the head of a long glen in Wicklow; a small and remote island off the west coast of Ireland; a distant hamlet in a mountainous district. His people are possessed of a perpetual fear of death and old age, and lead uneventful lives, having minds which continually crave for the performance of splendid and unusual deeds. Few men have put their longings and disappointments so boldly and plainly into their work as John Synge put his. I do not suggest that an author may be identified with every word and action of his creatures—a manifestly absurd suggestion—but I do suggest that it is possible for an intelligent reader to obtain a very clear and well-defined impression of the character and beliefs of an author from a careful study of the whole body of his work.

## II

Mr. John Galsworthy is the most sensitive figure in the ranks of modern men of letters, but his sensitiveness is of a peculiar nature, for it is almost totally impersonal. One thinks of Dostoievsky eternally pitying himself in the belief that he was pitying humanity and particularly that part of it which is Russian; or of Maxim Gorki, as shown in his vivid and extraordinary study of Leo Tolstoi,* preoccupied with himself to the extent of imagining that Tolstoi, the aristocrat, related salacious stories in common speech to him, the peasant, because he imagined that Gorki, being of vulgar origin, could not appreciate refined conversation:

> I remember my first meeting with him and his talk about "Varienka Oliessova" and "Twenty-six and One." From the ordinary point of view, what he said was a string of indecent words. I was perplexed by it and even offended. I thought that he considered me incapable of understanding any other kind of language. I understand now: it was silly to have felt offended.

One thinks, too, of Mr. Shaw's lively interest in himself, and of Mr. Wells's eagerness to remold

* *Reminiscences of Leo Nicolayevitch Tolstoi*, by Maxim Gorki.

the world nearer to his heart's desire. And remembering these men, intensely individual and not reluctant to speak of themselves, one is startled to discover how destitute of egotism Mr. Galsworthy seems to be. It may even be argued that his lack of interest in himself is a sign of inadequate artistry, that it is impossible for a man of supreme quality to be so utterly unconcerned about himself as Mr. Galsworthy is. He has written more than a dozen novels and at least a dozen plays, but there is not one line in any of them to denote that he takes any interest whatever in John Galsworthy. The most obvious characteristic of his work is an immense and, sometimes, indiscriminating pity, but I imagine that the only creature on whom he has no pity is himself. Whatever of joy and grief he has had in life has been closely retained, and the reticence which was characteristic of the English people—I am now using the word "English" in the strict sense—in prewar times, but is hardly characteristic of them now, is most clearly to be observed in Mr. Galsworthy. And yet there are few among contemporary writers who reveal so much of themselves as he does. Neither Mr. Shaw nor Mr. Wells,

who constantly expose their beliefs to their readers, do in the long run tell so much about their characters as Mr. Galsworthy, who never makes a conscious revelation of himself and is probably quite unaware that he had made any revelations at all. How often have we observed in our own relationships that some garrulous person, constantly engaged in egotistical conversation, contrives to conceal knowledge of himself from us, while some silent friend, with lips tightly closed, most amazingly gives himself away. One looks at Mr. Galsworthy's handsome, sensitive face and is immediately aware of tightened lips! . . . But the lips are not tightened because of things done to him, but because of things done to others.

I remember, more than ten years ago, reading a notice of the first performance of "Justice" in an English Sunday newspaper in which the critic, who must have been terribly drunk when he wrote it, attacked the play, making nine misstatements of fact about it in as many lines. Those were the days when I took the field on the slightest provocation. An insult offered to a man of letters for whom I had respect was an insult offered to me, and I made much trouble for myself by smacking

faces with great ferocity for offences, not against me, but against my friends and my betters. I wrote a letter to that critic which created some havoc in his sodden brain, and I then posted a copy of it to Mr. Galsworthy. He thanked me very civilly for what I had done, and added that he never replied to criticism of any sort! I was astounded by his statement and a little dashed. My faith in those days was, crudely, two eyes for one tooth! Those who struck at me might expect two blows in return. Like Mrs. Ferguson, in my play, "John Ferguson," I said to myself, "If anyone was to hurt me, I'd do my best to hurt them back and hurt them harder nor they hurt me!" I could not bring myself into line with the meekness of Mr. Galsworthy until I discovered in it a form of supreme arrogance! . . . Now that I know him and his work better, I realize that I was wrong in my estimation of him both as excessively meek and excessively arrogant. His rule never to reply to criticism, however unfair, is a sign, not of humility or pride, but of complete indifference to himself. I can believe in him becoming furious with one who belittles a dog, but I cannot be-

lieve in him displaying any feeling over one who belittles John Galsworthy.

But when I look at his tightened lips, I feel certain that they are drawn closely together, not to prevent himself from forgetting his indifference to himself, but to prevent him from pouring out his anger at wrong and cruelty suffered by other people. His hatred of injustice possesses him like a fury, so that I expect to find his hands always clenched. There are times, indeed, when he allows his feeling for others, human and animal, to destroy his sense of proportion, and he will sometimes imagine that people or beasts are suffering a great deal more of pain than they really are, even that they are suffering when in fact they are not suffering at all. This is the complaint most commonly made of him by his critics, that he sometimes exaggerates the extent to which people and, particularly, animals suffer. When I was a child, I remember that I often read in sentimental Sunday-school books of slum children who never smiled and had never seen grass. I suppose that fundamentally I have a sceptical mind, for even then I found myself doubting whether there

were any children in the world who had never seen grass. Grass is so persistent! . . . I knew that a street had only to be free of traffic for a short while and little blades of grass would begin to push up from between the cobbles! . . . It might be that slum children never smiled—though I was dubious of that—but all of them must have seen some grass sometime. Then I grew up and left Ulster and went to England, and for two or three years I lived on the confines of a slum in South London, where I discovered that my sentimental authors were sentimental liars, that poor people do not live lives of incessant misery, that they smile and laugh as often as, if not more frequently than, rich people, and are fully as happy as any one else. Happiness and unhappiness are conditions of the spirit, and provided a man has sufficient food to eat and a decent shelter and warm clothes, it matters very little whether he be rich or poor. Mr. Galsworthy is not always as sensible of this as he might be. Like many idealists he attaches more importance to material things than many materialists do. He lets himself be too easily persuaded that a thing is wrong because it looks wrong. If he had walked into the Valley of

Elah on that morning when the fair and ruddy youth, David, encountered Goliath, he would certainly have run to David's side. What combat could have seemed more unequal than that? David was young and slender and of ordinary stature. He wore no armor and his weapons were a sling and five pebbles casually picked from a brook. Goliath was five cubits and a span high, and his huge body was covered with heavy armor. There was a helmet of brass on his head, and there were greaves of brass on his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. His weapons were terrible: the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. A man walked in front of him carrying a shield! . . . No wonder that Goliath mocked at David and threatened to pick the flesh from his bones and give it to the birds. He probably felt that one breath from his mouth would blow David clean out of the valley. Mr. Galsworthy, had he been present on that occasion, would have said to himself, "Poor David, young and slight and ill-armed, has no chance whatever against this great hulking, uncircumcized Philistine! . . ." The combat certainly was an un-

equal one, but the advantage lay, not with Goliath, but with David. The giant had the outward show of strength, but David had the Power of God in his right arm, and before that Power Goliath was but a boneless beast. Mr. Galsworthy makes Stephen More in his play "The Mob," revile the crowd in these terms:

> You are the thing that pelts the weak; kicks women; howls down free speech. This to-day, and that to-morrow. Brain—you have none! Spirit—not the ghost of it! If you're not meanness, there's no such thing. If you're not cowardice, there is no cowardice.

Neither Stephen More nor Mr. Galsworthy appears to know that these characteristics of the mob are the characteristics of weak things. Strong men do not pelt the weak or kick women, nor do they prevent free speech. It is weak men and timid men and ignorant, frightened men—politicians and officials and guttersnipes and sinners—who do these things, because they have neither the courage nor the strength nor the intelligence to do otherwise. The mob-instinct of unreasoning chivalry, the natural impulse to take the part of "the little 'un," constitutes a very serious danger to Mr. Gals-

worthy's work: he is becoming increasingly partisan in his opinions and sympathies, with the result that his sentiment is in danger of degenerating into sentimentalism, and he, so commonly considered impartial, is likely to end in a state of hopeless and wrong-headed bias. He is beginning to believe that a weak man is right because he is weak. He is forgetting the truth enunciated, perhaps excessively, by Dr. Stockmann in "An Enemy of the People" that "the strongest man in the world is the man who stands absolutely alone." Or if he has not forgotten it, he is in danger of believing that a minority is always in the right because it is a minority: a belief which is as fallacious as that which Mr. G. K. Chesterton sometimes seems to hold, that a majority is always in the right because it is a majority. The plain and platitudinous truth is that only those are in the right who are in the right, whether they be in a majority or in a minority. Weakness, although it may endow a man with cunning, does not endow him with moral authority. Mr. Galsworthy at times lets his pity for weakness lead him into seeming to regard it as a sign of infallible judgment.

## III

Mr. Galsworthy can create people and he can write natural dialogue. "The Silver Box" is a testimony of his power to do so. But in his later plays he has not always allowed his creatures to behave in a creditable fashion, nor has he always written dialogue that exactly fits their tongues. One suspects, too, that he is losing his sense of proportion, that he is not so capable now as he was earlier in his career of distinguishing between things which are important and things which are not. He has developed an interest in trivial questions of sex and has become so absorbed in dilemmas of colliding characters that he has lost sight of the nature of his characters. He has been called a Determinist because he shows his people as the creature of circumstances, but in his later work, particularly in his play "The Fugitive," his Determinism has become wilful: he seems to have made up his mind that his characters shall become the victims of circumstances in defiance of facts and the natures with which he has created them. He deliberately ties their hands behind their backs and then exclaims: "These are the vic-

tims of adverse circumstances!" And indeed they are, but the circumstances have been artifically created by Mr. Galsworthy and not by any force that governs the universe. He is so eager to bring Clare Dedmond, in "The Fugitive," to her death in a restaurant frequented by prostitutes that he totally neglects to consider the fact that with the nature he gives her she is the last person on earth likely to end that way.

It is not in ideas that Mr. Galsworthy fails, so far as his later work is concerned—it is in execution. The idea of "The Fugitive" is a notable one. The play, which in its faults is significant of all Mr. Galsworthy's later plays, deals with the tragic failure of a sensitive woman to adjust her life to that of a dull, unimaginative man in whom, although the conventions and traditions of his class have schooled him into a certain decency of form, there is a very large measure of coarseness. The collision is between the finely-perceptive and the totally-imperceptive, and the theme is similar, in one respect, to that of "The Doll's House," and in another to that of "The Shadow of the Glen." But the treatment of it is very inferior to the treatment of it by Ibsen and Synge. Ibsen plainly showed

how impossible it was for Nora to continue to live with her husband after she had suffered her disillusionment. He showed with equal clarity how natural it was that she should marry and love her husband, and yet in the end, turn away from him. Mr. Galsworthy takes Clare Dedmond beyond the stage to which Ibsen took Nora. Ibsen was content to end his play with Nora's exit from her husband's home: he did not follow her from it nor show what became of her thereafter. Mr. Galsworthy is concerned less with the act of separation and more with the consequences if it. He is not so interested in her flight from her husband as he is in what happens to her after she has flown from him. He has taken a longer stretch of Clare's life than Ibsen took of Nora's, but he has contrived to make it smaller than Nora's. One derives an extraordinary sense of completeness and space from "The Doll's House," but does not derive a similar sense from "The Fugitive." Ibsen gives one a sense of familiarity with his people, but Mr. Galsworthy hardly makes one more familiar with Clare Dedmond and her husband than a reader of a newspaper is with the principal parties to a divorce suit.

Clare Dedmond, like Nora Burke in Synge's "The Shadow of the Glen," is suffering from starved emotions, but Synge in his one-act play has created the atmosphere of starved emotions far more successfully than Mr. Galsworthy has done in his four acts. The antagonism between Nora and Daniel Burke is instantly understood by the reader, who, however, cannot immediately understand why it is that Clare and George Dedmond do not "get on" together. The reader knows why Nora married Daniel. "And how would I live and I an old woman if I hadn't a bit of a farm with cows on it and sheep on the blackhills?" The sense of desolation in this woman's life is so powerfully expressed that the reader of the play does not ask questions. He does not stop to inquire why Nora married her husband: he *knows* why she married him, and this knowledge is derived, not from the author's assertions, but from the woman's behaviour. A sense of desolation is not created when the author says that there is desolation, nor is it created when a character says: "I am miserable!" It is created when the speech and behaviour of the characters are such as one hears and sees when people are unhappy. It would be absurd for a

writer to make a character say: "I have a very kindly disposition," and then show him in the normal habit of beating his wife, kicking his grandmother, and ill-treating animals . . . unless he were trying to be funny or were portraying a madman. There must be consistency between character and conduct, and the measure of a writer's artistry is the degree to which he succeeds in reconciling the one with the other.

It is when Mr. Galsworthy's later work is tested in this manner that one realizes how lamentably he has failed to create the illusion of life. One goes through the pages of "The Fugitive" making notes of interrogation! One does not ask: "Why did Ibsen's Nora marry her husband?" "Why did Synge's Nora marry her husband?" because one knows the answer to these questions from the beginning of the plays, and it is not necessary to ask them. But why did Clare Dedmond marry her husband? Because she loved him? Because she wished to be married and no one else had asked her? For money? To escape from her parents? It is impossible to say. Most of the faults which I find in Mr. Galsworthy's work are to be found in

this play and so I propose to examine it here in detail.

The story of "The Fugitive" is summarily this:—

Clare Huntington, the daughter of a poor parson, is married to George Dedmond, a man of wealth and social position. When the play begins these two have reached that point in their marital relationship when their unhappiness is plain to their acquaintances. The husband, irritated and puzzled, is eager to make a compromise which will not involve legal separation and "talk."

CLARE (*softly*). I don't give satisfaction. Please give me notice.

GEORGE. Pish!

CLARE. Five years, and four of them like this! I'm sure we've served our time. Don't you really think we might get on better together—if I went away.

GEORGE. I've told you I won't stand a separation for no real reason, and have your name bandied about all over London. I have some primitive sense of honour.

While travelling abroad the Dedmonds make the acquaintance of a journalist named Kenneth Malise who is employed on a weekly review. He and Clare become very friendly with each other,

but George, who declares that Malise is a bounder, does not share the friendship. Malise knows that Clare is unhappy in her marriage and he incites her to "spread your wings." He does not appear to have thought of what is to become of her when she spreads her wings, nor does he manifest any concern about her ability to remain in flight. His attitude towards her may roughly be said to be: "It doesn't matter what happens to you so long as you run away from your husband!" Clare eventually leaves her husband, and in the second act she goes to Malise's rooms to ask for his advice. She has taken his advice to spread her wings. What is she to do?

Mr. Malise very clearly does not know what she is to do. While he and she are debating about her future his rooms are invaded by Dedmond's parents, his solicitor, and, subsequently, by Dedmond himself. They endeavour to persuade Clare to return to her husband, which she refuses to do, and there is a scene in which George Dedmond, having offered to take Clare back to his home, goes away threatening to divorce her and cite Malise as co-respondent. After this scene Clare, in obedience to her queer sense of

honour, which impels her to make hateful returns for favours received, offers herself in physical submission to Malise, without, however, being able to conceal the fact that such submission is loathsome to her. It is necessary, in studying this play, to take considerable notice of Clare's attitude towards physical relationships. Sexual submission is repulsive to her, not only in relation to her husband, whom she dislikes, but also in relation to Malise, for whom she has so much liking that eventually she falls in love with him. At the moment at which the offer is first made, however, she is not in love with Malise: she offers herself to him because she feels that, having brought trouble upon him, she ought to make reparation for her conduct!

CLARE. If I must bring you harm—let me pay you back. I can't bear it otherwise! Make some use of me, if you don't mind!

MALISE. My God!

*She puts her face up to be kissed, shutting her eyes.*

MALISE. You poor——

*He clasps and kisses her; then, drawing back, looks in her face. She has not moved; her eyes are still closed. But she is shivering;*

*her lips are tightly pressed together, her hands twitching.*

MALISE (*very quietly*). No, no! This is not the house of a "gentleman."

CLARE. (*letting her head fall, and almost in a whisper*). I'm sorry—

MALISE. I understand.

CLARE. I don't feel. And without—I can't, can't.

MALISE (*bitterly*). Quite right. You've had enough of that.

That speech—"I don't feel. And without—I can't, can't"—is the key-speech of Clare Dedmond's nature, and, in view of the end of the play, must be remembered.

Malise, recognizing that Clare cannot happily be his mistress otherwise than in name, will not accept her offer of physical submission merely as a return for what he may have to bear in her behalf, and so she leaves his flat. She obtains employment as a shop-assistant, and is not seen again, by her family or by Malise, for three months. Then, after she has encountered a relative, she bolts in a panic from the shop and returns to Malise's flat. She proposes to do typewriting and asks him to find employment for her. He gives her some of his own MSS. to type, and while they are

discussing her prospects of employment she reveals the fact that she now loves him.

MALISE. Can you typewrite where you are?

CLARE. I have to find a new room, anyway. I'm changing—to be safe. (*She takes a luggage ticket from her glove*). I took my things to Charing Cross—only a bag and one trunk. (*Then, with that queer expression on her face which prefaces her desperations.)* You don't want me now, I suppose?

MALISE. What?

CLARE. (*hardly above a whisper*). Because—if you still wanted me—I do—now.

MALISE (*staring hard into her face that is quivering and smiling*). You mean it? You *do*? You care?

CLARE. I've thought of you—so much. But only—if you're sure.

*He clasps her, and kisses her closed eyes.*

That love declaration is singularly unconvincing, more so to the reader of the play than to the witness of it. It is not unlikely that Clare's liking for Malise increased during the three months of their separation, particularly as she regarded him as a benefactor to whom she had brought trouble, but it seems to me to be improbable that she would declare her love so casually. Mr. Galsworthy's stage directions make the puzzle more involved.

If Clare were in love with Malise to the extent of overcoming her hatred of physical contacts, she would hardly have "that queer expression on her face which prefaces her desperations." When a man or woman is desperate he or she is hopeless or almost hopeless, and if Mr. Galsworthy's stage directions are to be taken seriously then they mean that Clare was willing to become the mistress of Malise for much the same reason that a rat will fight in a corner. But if her words mean what they would seem to mean, surely, given her character and remembering what she has endured, her surrender to Malise will not be accompanied by any signs of desperation at all, but in sheer reaction, if nothing else, by every sign of jubilation and relief.

The attitude of Malise towards Clare does not appear to have undergone any change at all; he is not any more in love with her in the third act than he was in the first act, when, indeed, his love had a dubious aspect. There is no warmth in the man, no glow. He is cold, not with the hard, sharp, tingling cold of ice, but with the flabby chill of a dead fish. When George Dedmond institutes divorce proceedings, citing Malise as co-

respondent, the fellow goes to pieces, and whines and bleats to his charwoman because the proprietors of the review on which he is employed propose to dismiss him. They have some scruples against writers who become involved in scandals. The charwoman informs Clare of Malise's misery, and she, knowing that her husband will abandon the suit if she leaves Malise, goes quietly from his flat. Her next appearance is in a restaurant, largely patronized by prostitutes. One does not know what has happened to her in the meantime, but it is plain that she must have suffered acutely, for this delicately bred woman, sensitive to the point of morbidity about sexual relationships, has decided to become a prostitute! We see her entering "The Gascony" for the first time when the fourth act begins. A young man, ordinary, decent, and uncommonly lustful, makes overtures to her, treating her with kindliness when he discovers that he is her first customer. His kindliness helps to reconcile her to her position, and she prepares to leave the restaurant with him. While he is paying the bill two coarse men leer at her, and one of them accosts her, making an appointment for the following evening. As she

watches his coarse face, inflamed with lust, she realises the horror of the life she is about to lead, and suddenly makes a decision—she takes a bottle of poison from her dress, pours its contents into a wine-glass, and drinks it. She dies while some sportsmen in an adjoining room play "the last notes of an old song 'This Day a Stag Must Die' on a horn." And that is the end of the play.

It seems to me to be incredible that Clare Dedmond should have gone to that restaurant to sell herself to any casual purchaser. It seems to me, given her nature, incredible that she should even have thought of such a way of life or that, having thought of it, she should not instantly poison herself rather than endure it. Mr. Galsworthy insists throughout the play on her exceptional sensitiveness about sex-relationships. I think that psychologically he has over-stated this sensitiveness, but, assuming that he has not done so, is it conceivable that a woman who shivers and twitches her hands when she is kissed by a man whom she likes will consent to put on fine clothes and go to a notorious restaurant and sit at a table while men inspect her? . . . (I leave out of consideration such questions as: "Where did she obtain the fine clothes?" "How

did she acquire her knowledge of 'The Gascony'? ") If she were prepared to endure that last of all defilements, why did she run away from her husband? If she were capable of selling her embraces, why did she shiver and twitch when Malise kissed her? George Dedmond was not a "bad" man. He did not ill-treat her nor was he faithless to her. He insisted, indeed, on sexual submissions, but one has difficulty in believing that her horror of these, "unless I feel," was very strong since she was willing to suffer the casual amours of "The Gascony." There would have been something pitiable in her if, after leaving Malise, she had returned to George. There would have been something tragical in her if, reluctant to return to George, she had killed herself when she found that she could not maintain herself in decency. But there is nothing either pitiable or tragical in the end devised for her by Mr. Galsworthy. It is an arranged and schemed destiny that overwhelms Clare Dedmond, arranged and schemed not by Circumstance but by Mr. Galsworthy, and having no relation whatever to the nature of the woman. Mr. Galsworthy wanted to poison her in "The Gascony," and so he thrust

her into the restaurant in plain disregard of her character and of common facts.

There is a phrase in the play which is intended to illuminate Clare's nature. "You're too fine," Mrs. Fullarton says to her, "and you're not fine enough to endure things." How can one be too fine to endure a thing and yet not fine enough to endure it? And, having begun to question in that fashion, one goes on again to wonder why she married her husband. "Five years" (of marriage), she says to her husband, "and four of them like this!" Here is no case of slow transformation of love into dislike or of instant disillusionment. Clare does not suddenly discover or slowly discover that George is not the sort of man she had imagined him to be, for he remains throughout the play exactly the sort of man he was when she was wooed and married by him. He did not become prosaic, unimaginative, and coarse after marriage: he was always like that; and Clare, so sensitive as she was, must have been jarred by him as much before marriage as she was a year after marriage. There is no suggestion in the play that she married for money. Had she done so, surely she would, when we remember the depths to which she was

subsequently prepared to descend, have borne his dullness and coarseness, not gladly, perhaps, but with fortitude?

The processes of attraction and repulsion are so complicated that it is difficult to say where one begins and the other ends, but this difficulty is hardly to be experienced in cases where the personalities are so marked and divergent as were the personalities of Clare and George Dedmond. If one were to take a man like Squire Western in "Tom Jones" and marry him to Mélisande in "Pelléas et Mélisande," one could prophesy with some certainty what would be the result of such a marriage. It would be disastrous. Left to the ordinary processes of nature, however, such a marriage would not take place at all.

But the difficulty of fathoming Clare's relationships does not end with her husband. It is equally difficult to understand her attitude towards Malise. What attracted her to this extraordinarily ill-bred man who sneers openly at her relatives and friends, mocking and insulting them to her and to their faces? The Dedmonds, parents and son, are dense, but they are decent. They live by rule because they cannot live by any other

means. It is not their fault that they cannot understand Clare's point of view, any more than it is the fault of a blind man that he falls over an obstacle which he cannot see. Malise regards them as malignant people, deliberately imprisoning an aspiring woman. His vision of them is as narrow as is theirs of him, and, since he has not got their breeding or kindliness, his conduct is caddish where theirs is merely stupid. There is no magnitude or charity in this man. He spends his days and nights in writing petulant screeds in the style of Thomas Carlyle: windy stuff, blowing out of a noisome mind; and when he has induced one helpless, incompetent woman to follow his creed he fails her completely.

The last sentences of the play show that Mr. Galsworthy had set his mind on Clare's death in disregard of the probabilities. Clare, having swallowed the poison, is lying back in her chair, presumably dead.

*The Young Man has covered his eyes with his hands; Arnaud is crossing himself fervently; the Languid Lord stands gazing with one of the dropped gardenias twisted in his fingers; and the woman bending over Clare, kisses her forehead.*

That is a piece of theatricality. It has no relationship to real things. Those people, in life, would not have stood about in sentimental attitudes watching a woman die of poison. The young man would have flown for a doctor; the waiter would have rushed off for an emetic; the languid lord would have lost his languid airs in his desire to get away from the restaurant in fear lest he might be summoned as a witness at the inquest; and the woman would promptly have had hysterics.

## IV

He seems to be most impressed, in viewing the human scene, by the sense of property which he discovers in mankind. In his best work, the novels of the Forsyte Saga, beginning with "The Man of Property" and ending with "To Let" one finds him attributing this sense to human beings to a degree which is, in my belief, entirely excessive. Soames Forsyte, "the man of property," is portrayed to us as a man who regards all things, human and otherwise, as things to be owned. His wife is a piece of property just as a picture or a dog is. When he obtains a divorce from her and marries a young

French girl, Annette, he treats the latter as a piece of valuable property useful for the purpose of producing a still more valuable piece of property; and when Annette bears a daughter to him, he is left exclaiming almost passionately that this child is *his,* not hers ,and his, but *his!* All the members of the Forsyte family, described with great particularity, are possessed of this sense of property, but it is more highly developed in Soames than in any of them. Even those members of it, like young Jolyon Forsyte, who break with the family tradition, concentrate on this property point. They only differ from the rest of the family in being anti-, rather than pro-, property. None of them seems to be indifferent to property. The dominating influence in their lives, either for happiness or for misery, is property. Mr. Galsworthy states of them that as they watched the funeral of Queen Victoria, they felt that they were burying more history for their money than had ever been buried before. One of the Forsyte women loves the statement of Christ that "In My Father's house are many mansions" because it comforts her sense of property. Most of the conflict in the Galsworthy novels springs from the re-

actions of the characters to this sense, and it is laboured to the point of attenuation. The temperamental differences between Soames and Irene Forsyte in "The Man of Property" are obscurely stated, and still more obscurely stated in the dramatized version of their relationship called "The Fugitive," in which Soames and Irene become George and Clare Dedmond, and Bosinney, the architect-lover, becomes Malise, the journalist-lover. It is true that the differences which break a marriage are sometimes the result of fundamental things which cannot be described with the clarity of the items in an auctioneer's catalogue; but the business of an artist is to make obscure things plain and understandable, and the success of his work depends upon the way in which he impresses his readers with the vagueness and obscurity of these things and yet at the same time makes them realize how substantial they are. Soames and Irene Forsyte may not be able to say why they cannot live together, but Mr. Galsworthy must be able to do so and he must empower his readers to do so, too. A novelist gives a sense of inarticulateness in a character, not by making him so inarticulate that the readers cannot hear or

understand a word he is saying, but by making his inarticulateness articulate. The danger into which many writers tumble headlong is that they will spend all their energies on getting the details right and will leave the general effect obscure. One sees signs of this in Mr. Galsworthy's work. He is so busy endowing his people with a sense of property that he occasionally omits to endow them with a sense of humanity. If one compares the Forsyte novels, say, "In Chancery," with Mrs. Edith Wharton's latest book, "The Age of Innocence," one discovers that in each case, the theme is concerned with the institution of the family, with the tribal instinct which makes the majority of minds seek identity rather than dissimilarity. But in Mrs. Wharton's book, this tribal instinct is humanly expressed, whereas in Mr. Galsworthy's it is not. I recognize Mrs. Wharton's people as human beings, but I am sceptical about Mr. Galsworthy's people. Old Mrs. Mingott, in "The Age of Innocence," has affinity with old Jolyon Forsyte in "The Man of Property" and "The Indian Summer of a Forsyte." (He is the most human figure in the Saga.) But the rest of the cast in the Forsyte Saga has less relevance to humanity than the rest

of the cast in "The Age of Innocence," and the reason is, I think, that Mr. Galsworthy has allowed his theory to get the better of his people, whereas Mrs. Wharton, whatever her theory may be, has kept her eye very steadfastly on human beings. The Countess Olenska in "The Age of Innocence" has verisimilitude which is absent from the figure of Irene Forsyte in "The Man of Property" or Clare Dedmond in "The Fugitive." We can comprehend Ellen Olenska, but Irene Forsyte utterly eludes us.

## V

One entertains oneself with noting how differently an experience of life presents itself to Mr. Galsworthy from the way in which it presents itself to Mr. Bernard Shaw. Mr. Galsworthy sends Falder, in his play "Justice," to prison and flattens him out. Mr. Shaw sends Margaret Knox and Bobby Gilbert, in "Fannie's First Play," to prison and amazingly enlarges their lives. What utterly depresses Mr. Galsworthy, stimulates and even exalts Mr. Shaw. If Mr. Galsworthy tortures us to the point at which we wish to rush out of the theatre

and raze Wormwood Scrubbs and Pentonville to the ground, Mr. Shaw causes us to feel that each of us might be considerably benefitted by a sojourn there. Mr. Galsworthy sees a goal as a place where thought is destroyed or embittered: Mr. Shaw sees it as a place where thought is provoked and clarified; and between them, a simple-minded person cannot make up his mind whether to subscribe to the funds of the Howard League for Penal Reform or to advocate penal servitude for every one in the interests of Higher Thought. Adversity, says Mr. Galsworthy, knocks a man down. Adversity, says Mr. Shaw, braces him up. The first statement may fill a man with pity, but the latter is more likely to make a hero of him.

## VI

I like "The Country House" and "Five Tales" and "To Let" better than anything else that Mr. Galsworthy has written. The human sense is more truly felt in these books than in any others that he has done. There are few figures in modern fiction so tender and beautiful as Mrs. Pendyce in "The Country House" and few figures so im-

mensely impressive and indomitable as the old man in the story called "The Stoic" which is the first of the "Five Tales." The craftsmanship of "To Let" is superb—this novel is, perhaps, the most technically-correct book of our time—but its human value is even greater than its craftsmanship. In a very vivid fashion, Mr. Galsworthy shows the passing of a tradition and an age. He leaves Soames Forsyte in lonely age, but he does not leave him entirely without sympathy; for this muddleheaded man, unable to win or to keep affection on any but commercial terms, contrives in the end to win the pity and almost the love of the reader who has followed his varying fortunes through their stupid career. The frustrate love of Fleur and Jon is certainly one of the tenderest things in modern fiction. Mr. Galsworthy has a love of beauty which permeates everything that he writes and reconciles his more critical readers to his dubious characterization. I suppose the truth about his work is that he has not sufficiently disciplined his feelings and, for this reason, allows his sympathies with his suffering people to swamp his judgments. He is, in every act and thought, a chivalrous man, and his instinct is, not to examine the facts of a

case, but to rush instantly and hotly to the defence of the seemingly defenceless. An artist is never indifferent to the wrongs of men, but his artistry prevents him from making mistakes about the persons who are suffering the wrongs. One's fear is that Mr. Galsworthy is inclined to allow his philanthropy to take the place of his artistry. Even in that fine book, "The Country House," he sometimes makes a formula or a trick out of some fine, instinctive sentiment. In the fourth chapter of part II, Mr. Pendyce, during a period of stress, treads on a spaniel's foot.

> The spaniel yelped. "D——n the dog! Oh, poor fellow, John!" said Mr. Pendyce.

Now, in those words, one has exemplified the acute penetration into people's minds and emotions which is discoverable in Mr. Galsworthy; but he is not content to leave the incident in its simplicity and nature. Before we have reached the end of the chapter, that instinctive utterance by Mr. Pendyce has become a rather threadbare literary trick by Mr. Galsworthy. Mr. Pendyce treads on the dog again two pages later, and Mr. Pendyce repeats himself exactly: "D——n the dog! Oh, poor fellow, John!" And five pages later, he treads on

the spaniel a third time, and a third time he says, "D——n the dog! Oh, poor fellow, John!" It is obvious, surely, that on the first occasion, Mr. Galsworthy made Mr. Pendyce speak from his heart, but on the second and third occasions he made him speak like a ventriloquist's doll. One can find many similarly inapt things even in this book, where Mr. Galsworthy keeps very close to humanity. Mr. Pendyce ejaculates, on hearing that his son has gone after illicit love, "What on earth made me send George to Eton?" when he himself had been educated at another school. One knows what Mr. Galsworthy is here trying to do, to express the love of tradition and custom which governs the life of such a man as Mr. Pendyce, but he does not achieve the effect by such speeches. The reader feels certain that whatever else Mr. Pendyce may have said on that occasion, he did not say, "What on earth made me send George to Eton?" Too many of his people make impotent gestures, and it is remarkable that these important people are nearly always his most idealistic characters. Such an one is Gregory Vigil in "The Country House" who constantly clutches his forehead and tilts his face towards the sky and generally strikes attitudes

of despair until one begins to feel that he is the weakest of weaklings. And it is extraordinary to observe what havoc Mr. Galsworthy, ordinarily a very fastidious writer, sometimes makes of the English language. In "The Man of Property" he gives a detailed description of Mrs. Septimus Small in the course of which he states that "an innumerable pout clung all over" her face, and on the page immediately succeeding the one on which that queer description occurs, he states that Mrs. Small "owned three canaries, the cat Tommy, and half a parrot—in common with her sister Hester. . . ." We may, perhaps, pass "an innumerable pout" as an impressionistic phrase, but it is quite clear that carelessness caused Mr. Galsworthy to say that Mrs. Septimus Small owned "half a parrot—in common with her sister Hester" when what he wished to say was that Hester and she were joint owners of a parrot! He sometimes uses images which are almost ludicrous. In "Saints Progress," we get this curious account of an old woman in tears:

> A little pasty woman with a pinched yellowish face was already sitting there, so still, and seeming to see so little, that Noel wondered of what she could be thinking.

While she watched, the woman's face began puckering, and tears rolled slowly down, *trickling from pucker to pucker....*

The italics are mine.

It is his sincerity and his chivalry and his pity and his sense of beauty, a little too conscious, perhaps, which, much more than his powers of thought, make us read his novels and witness the performance of his plays. These qualities tend to become obsessions in him with the result that his sense of proportion and his verity are disorganized and he is led into sentimentalities, some of which, on first sight, have an impressive appearance which is not maintained after closer scrutiny. In one of his plays, "A Bit o' Love," he makes the chief character, a young clergyman, end the play with this prayer:

> God, of the moon and the sun; of joy and beauty, of loneliness and sorrow—Give me strength to go on, till I love every living thing.

That is a prayer which sounds impressive until it is critically considered. It is not possible for a man to love every living thing. There are certain things which he hates with his mind and certain things which he hates with his instincts, and it

is either very difficult or impossible for him to control those hatreds. The best he can hope for is the power to restrain his hatred from active demonstrations. There are hatreds which he ought to possess, hatreds which Mr. Galsworthy himself possesses in a high degree; hatred of cruel men, hatred of oppressive men, hatred of men who promote discord out of sheer devilish delight; but these hatreds are feeble in comparison with the instinctive hatreds most of us have without understanding why we have them. To pray for strength to go on until one loves every living thing is, therefore, to pray for the moon, and exalted desires which are insusceptible of realization become banalites. There are times, in his anger at coarseness and cruel insult and lack of pity, when Mr. Galsworthy attributes a degree of ruffianliness to people which is lacking in verity. In "Saint's Progress," he causes "two big loutish boys" to jeer at the old clergyman, Pierson, whose daughter has had a war-baby without being married. The two "loutish boys" shout after him, "Wot price the little barstard?" Now, I simply do not believe that such a thing happened or could have happened in London during the war. Cruelty did not mani-

fest itself in just that way, and it is here, I think, that one discovers Mr. Galsworthy's chief disability, the fact that his powers of observation are not so acute as one might reasonably expect them to be. There is an old saying that the looker-on sees most of the game—and there is some truth in it; but it is true also that the looker-on may be totally ignorant of, or misinformed about, the game, whereas those who are engaged in it have a fairly comprehensive notion of what they are doing. Mr. Galsworthy gives me the impression of being a looker-on at the game rather than a participator in it, and although he is sometimes a very impassioned spectator, yet he suffers from the disability of all spectators that they are not clearly instructed in the principles and the prejudices of the contest. He is praying for strength to love every living thing when he should be praying for the power to distinguish between what is lovable and what is detestable, between true things and false things. There are few people who can depict the helplessness of dull men so skilfully and movingly as Mr. Galsworthy can. I doubt whether any of his contemporaries could so revealingly describe the state of mind of a man, spiritu-

ally imperceptive and puzzled by his inability to understand, as Mr. Galsworthy in his novel "In Chancery" has described Soames Forsyte after he has obtained a divorce from his first wife. The dumb animal bewilderment of this man, still in love with Irene but utterly confounded by her complete revulsion from him, is done with the most extraordinary penetration; and it is scenes such as this, which cause his readers all the more to marvel at his obsessions and their attendant failures.

One rises from a consideration of his work in the belief that he pities mankind, but does not love it. He is a spectator of our struggles rather than a comrade in them. He stands at the side of the road or perhaps on an eminence a little way off and watches the procession as it goes by. We feel certain that if we are in trouble he will display signs of sorrow for us, but we are equally certain that he will never share our common qualities and faults. Rabelais would have been self-conscious in the presence of Mr. Galsworthy, had they been contemporaries, and Mr. Galsworthy might have despised, would certainly have been uncomfortable with that foul physician who, nevertheless, corresponded more closely to this various clay we

call mankind, would have known and understood more certainly the ups and downs of human character, the mixture of coarseness and refinement, of falsity and faith, of chivalry and treachery, of generosity and meanness, of selfishness and unselfishness, of rare and common, than Mr. Galsworthy is ever likely to do. Mr. Hardy, in a preface to "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" declares that "a novel is an impression, not an argument" and in those eight words has summarized the whole business of story-telling. Mr. Galsworthy can tell a story very skilfully. His technique is remarkable, as any one who has read "To Let" or seen a performance of "Loyalties" can testify; but there are too many occasions when he seems to have let go his hold on reality and to be writing out of dim memories which are growing dimmer. His characters resemble people who are hurriedly seen through a window by one who is ignorant of their identity and anxious, chiefly, to be at home. They are making gestures and their lips move, but the hasty footfarer outside cannot hear what they are saying and he sees only the gestures, incomplete, perhaps, but does not know why they are made; and because he knows so little, he is likely to misunderstand all.

I imagine that when Mr. Galsworthy goes into a garden, his delight in it is dashed by the thought that somewhere near at hand a thrush is killing a snail! . . .

# GEORGE MOORE

## I

I WAS in Dublin on the day when the news of the Battle of Jutland was announced in such abrupt terms that most people imagined the British Fleet had been irretrievably defeated. The affairs of the Abbey Theatre, of which I was then in control, had been brought to a pause because of the military regulations imposed upon the city after the Easter Rising, and Mr. Moore, new from London, asked me to employ some of my leisure in making a reconciliation between Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats on the one hand and himself on the other. I foolishly consented to see what could be done, chiefly because of the innocent wonder which I detected in Mr. Moore at the fact that any one could possibly take offence at anything he might say, however revelatory of private affairs it might be; and I spent some time in the pursuit of peace. Lady Gregory declared that she had no feeling against Mr. Moore because of what he had said

about her in his trilogy, "Hail and Farewell," but that she could never forgive the insults it contained to Mr. Yeats. Mr. Yeats, endeavouring to think deeply about the Rising, declared that he had forgotten, if indeed he had ever remembered, the insults to himself in the trilogy, but that he could not pardon those offered to Lady Gregory. Moore had broken bread in her house, and then had gone away and made fun of her! Worse than that, he had belittled her work. He had said that her plays were not great plays and that her "Kiltartan" dialect was not the dialect of the people of Ireland, but a tortured, unrhythmic invention of her own! . . . I proposed to them that they should pool their pardons and receive him into the fold again, but my proposal was not accepted, and so I set off from Lady Gregory's lodgings in Dublin to tell Mr. Moore, staying in the Shelbourne Hotel, of the failure of my mission. On the way, I encountered newspaper boys, carrying placards on which was printed the news of the Battle of Jutland. When I got to the hotel and was shown into Mr. Moore's private sitting-room, I found assembled there, Mr. Moore, white with anger and dismay, "A. E.," "John Eglinton" (William Magee)

and the late W. F. Bailey, a Land Commissioner, a Privy Councillor and a Trustee of the Abbey Theatre, who had the most extensive acquaintance of any man I have ever known. Mr. Moore was seated in the middle of the room, looking very like a portrait of himself, facing his friends, who were huddled together on a sofa in the shadow as if they were three misbehaving schoolboys receiving a severe rebuke from their master. I could not tell Mr. Moore at that moment of the result of my mission, and in the excitement of the subsequent argument I forgot to do so, but I doubt whether he was then in a mood to care whether he was forgiven or not.

## II

It is several years now since that day when I heard Mr. Moore haranguing Mr. Russell and Mr. Magee and Mr. Bailey on the Battle of Jutland, but my recollection of the occasion is very vivid, partly because I have a good memory for things which interest me (and none at all for things in which I am not interested) but chiefly because it seemed to me that on that day Mr. Moore definitely became

an old man. His age is not stated in the books of reference, for Mr. Moore is as reticent as an actress on this point, but he is older than Mr. Shaw, who is much older than Mr. Yeats or "A. E." It may seem singular that he, so destitute of reserve in other and more intimate matters, should be secretive on this, but I fancy that his failure to publish the number of his years is due less to vanity than to inability to believe that he is as old as they denote. Judged by the rules of arithmetic his age is—so much; but judged by his feelings, it is—much less. Facts are stubborn things, so we are told, demanding acceptance and unquestioned admission, but Mr. Moore declines to accept the fact of time: he ignores it. But on the day on which the news of the Battle of Jutland was made public, the fact of time ceased to be ignorable, and Mr. Moore, for the first moment in his life, yielded to his years. He looked old and he talked as old men talk. There was a note of panic in his voice, of frightened urgency, and he complained bitterly of those who saw importance in a mean brawl in Dublin, but remained indifferent to an event which might result in the destruction of a desirable civilization. I doubt whether anything in the world had

ever until that day been serious to Mr. Moore in the sense that loss and suffering and great grief are serious. I am certain that he never understood why people were angry with him because of "Hail and Farewell." The resentment manifested against him by Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats was to him incomprehensibly petty: the deeper resentment of other people, more grievously wounded by his revelations which they declared to be untrue, filled him with astonishment. The spectacle of life was so much of a spectacle to him that he could not conceive of it as anything else to others. He had made himself so completely, not a participant in affairs, but an observer of them, that he had lost the faculty of personal feeling. His interest in acts and motives was so intense that he could not understand any one objecting to his prying into the more entertaining of their private relationships. Equally difficult was it for him to understand that they should deeply disrelish the idea of having their affairs, intimate and even secret, used as material for a book by Mr. Moore. Any human experience, he seems to argue, particularly when narrated in his exquisite style, is of value to mankind, and it must have seemed to him that there

was something, not only absurd, but also disgraceful in the objection many people had to the publication of their private concerns. Had he not paid tribute to privacy by omitting names or inventing others than the proper ones? True, everyone knew who were the persons portrayed, but was that his fault? And since every one knew already of the affairs, what possible harm could there be in his putting them into perfect and publishable prose? The objection raised by some persons that the incidents narrated by him as facts were pure inventions was frivolous! What was truth? Mr. Moore, like jesting Pilate, asked the question, but did not wait for a reply: he published as quickly as he could. The three volumes which make up "Hail and Farewell" are remarkable and have much value, but it is necessary to remember that Mr. Moore has not always been careful in them to distinguish between the historian and the novelist, between the recorder and the inventor. There are many dull passages in the trilogy, especially those in which he relates his experiences with his kinsman, Mr. Edward Martyn, a charge which Mr. Moore would not deny, but, on the contrary, proudly admit, for he insists that dullness is a

prominent feature of all great books. It is only the newspapers and ephemeral books which are interesting from beginning to end, he asserts—a statement which implies that Mr. Moore has been happier in his newspapers than most people have. In this matter of privacies, Mr. Moore was, and still is, the most complete and consistent of communists. He believes in private property, but not in private feelings. One imagines him, in the days before the Battle of Jutland, asking in puzzled fashion, "What do you mean when you say you *feel* things? What *is* feeling? Why should it ever be *private?*" "This lady is in love with that gentleman who is not her husband! How interesting! I shall write a book about their love for each other. They may object! But why? Her husband's feelings! . . . Now, isn't that absurd!" And so on. Miss Susan Mitchell, in a very entertaining, but not entirely sympathetic book, entitled "George Moore," declares that he seceded from the Roman Catholic Church because he objected to the secrecy of the confessional. His sins, he considered, were so absorbingly interesting that they ought to be publicly confessed rather than confided to an undivulging priest. The flaw in

Miss Mitchell's argument is her assumption that Mr. Moore had any sins to confess! . . .

## III

But on this day when the news of the Battle of Jutland was announced, Mr. Moore seemed, for the first time in his life, to realize that men and women do feel and suffer and bear loss; and the discovery instantly aged him. The War which had so teasingly disturbed the amenities of Ebury Street became in a moment something more than an irritating scuffle in the dark—it became an immense disaster which might make amenities forever impossible. The solidities of life were in process of dissolution. Literary style amazingly mattered less than the power of the commonest guttersnipe to kill. Mr. Bernard Shaw, in the preface to "Heartbreak House," exclaims, "Imagine exulting in the death of Beethoven because Bill Sykes dealt him his death blow!" in a rebuke administered to the people who rejoiced in the news of appalling death-rolls among Germans during the War. But on the field itself, Beethoven and Bill Sykes cease to be Beethoven and Bill Sykes and become,

each, a very frightened man with a rifle and bayonet and a strong desire to live. In that dreadful encounter, Bill Sykes would not be thinking to himself, "Here comes Beethoven, a great master of music, by whom it will be an honor to be killed!" but " 'Ere comes a bloody 'Un who will kill me unless I kill 'im!" The perception of what was happening in Europe, of the horrible reduction of Beethovens to the level of Sykeses, of Shakespeares to the level of Prussian drill-sergeants (for they had to come down to those levels if they were to have any hope of survival) made an old man of Mr. Moore. He threw up his hands and made submission to his years. I listened to him while he talked volubly and bitterly to "A. E." and "John Eglinton" and "Bill" Bailey, as people called him, and marvelled to find him displaying so much emotion over the naval disaster and its probable consequences. He had written a preface for his brother, Colonel Moore's life of their father, in which he had romantically stated that George Henry Moore, his father, had committed suicide because his heart was broken by the dishonourable behaviour of politicians. Colonel Moore printed the preface, but denied the state-

ment about his father, to which, however, George still romantically clings. An English newspaper, *The Observer,* in its issue for Sunday, April 10, 1921, printed the preface which Mr. Moore had written for a new book to be published very soon thereafter. In this preface, he very interestingly described the way in which he was educated, and in the course of it occurred this paragraph:

> He was unhappy in the strife, for he loved his father; his father was always, and still is, the intimate and abiding reality of his life, and the evening that his father started for Ireland for the last time is quick among his memories. George's father returned from the front door to bid his son good-bye, and in obedience to a sudden impulse he took a sovereign out of his pocket and put it into the boy's hand, and went away to his death resolute, for he had come to see that his death was the only way to escape from his embarrassments, without injury to his family, and I can imagine him walking about the lake shores bidding them good-bye for ever.

I suppose that if George Henry Moore were to rise from the grave and deny that he had died by his own hand, his son and heir, George, would murmur aggrievedly, "You know, father, you are spoiling a very charming story! . . ." He is still sufficiently insensitive not to understand that life

is something more than material for the story-teller's art—he may, perhaps have relapsed from the state of understanding to which the Battle of Jutland brought him,—but for that time, at all events until the news of the Battle was amended, George Moore knew what private feelings were, even although he could not keep them to himself. "A. E.," looking woolly and worried, seemed to be completely deprived of his powers of speech by Mr. Moore's angry rhetoric. "John Eglinton," a scholarly essayist and the sanest man in Dublin, having much respect for, but no delusion about, the ancient Gaelic literature of which we hear so much and see so little, remained customarily mum. Mr. Bailey, nervously garrulous as a rule, uttered jerky, but inarticulate, sounds to which Mr. Moore paid absolutely no heed. I discreetly sat in a corner and did not make a sound. The words flowed steadily from Mr. Moore's lips—hot denunciation of the Rising, contemptuous references to Kuno Meyer, rebukes for "A. E." (discovered to have flaws) and a tremendous indictment of German culture, with a proviso in favour of German music, together with admiring references to France, to French literature and to the French

Impressionists, particularly Manet. A waiter intruded into the room for some purpose and was ordered out again. . . .

## IV

Of all that Mr. Moore said on that extraordinary occasion, I remember most his sudden outburst into what he called practical politics. He demanded the impeachment of Mr. Asquith, the restoration of the Coronation Oath and the abolition of all dogs! The comic incongruity of those three items in a plan to win the war was apparent neither to him nor his three elderly auditors, or so it seemed, and I deemed it wise to control my laughter. Mr. Moore declared that Mr. Asquith's inertia, of which we were hearing so much then, was certain to bring defeat to the Allies. One of Mr. Asquith's daughters had sat beside Mr. Moore at dinner one night in London and had informed her neighbour that "Father is bored with the War!" whereupon Mr. Moore informed her (or so he said) that her father's boredom might cause the Allies to lose the War. Mr. Asquith was guilty of more serious crimes than that: he had ruined the Irish gentle-

man and delivered the country over to hobbledehoys and low minded peasants. Not content with ruining Ireland, no longer fit to be inhabited by gentlemen, fit only to be the country of publicans, pawnbrokers, priests and politicians, Mr. Asquith had tried to make equal ruin in England. He has abolished the Coronation Oath which, until his advent, had always been administered to the kings of England at their crowning. In this Oath, they declare their belief that the Mass is an idolatrous ceremony, not to be acknowledged by reasonable persons and likely to be accepted only by vulgar Papists. Mr. Asquith, mindful of the fact that many hundreds of thousands of Catholics are members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, decided that the kings of England should not be humiliated and embarrassed at their coronation by the compulsion to insult the faith of many of their subjects; and so he introduced a Bill into Parliament to abolish the Oath, which was, in due time, abolished. Mr. Moore seemed to think that all the evils from which mankind has suffered since 1914 directly sprang from that political achievement.

As for dogs, these abominable animals, he said,

are nuisances at any time, but during a war and period of food shortage, they are a positive menace to the country. He begged us to consider (a) the great quantity of food consumed by dogs, (b) the amount of nervous irritability brought about by their incessant yapping, and (c) the extent to which they defile the streets. He threatened us with famine, insanity and, finally, plague! . . . There is an English poet who is also a breeder of bulldogs. Whenever he reads one of Mr. Moore's periodical canine denunciations, he becomes so enraged that only the strongest efforts of his friends prevent him from emptying the contents of his kennels on to Mr. Moore's doorstep that they may there do their worst. The ambition of his life is to see one of his bulldogs fasten its teeth firmly in the calf of Mr. Moore's venerable leg. . . .

## V

All that has been written here so far will seem to support the superstition that Mr. Moore is a trifler with life, that he is a man destitute of serious purposes; but I am anxious to make plain to my readers that this superstition is a superstition.

His lack of reticence about his own and other people's affairs and his perverse incursions into what he imagines to be practical politics are obviously responsible for the belief that he is what is called "a typical Irishman," that is to say, a man without a sense of responsibility. My experience is that "typical Irishmen" are generally discovered to be Englishmen or Welshmen or New York East Side Jews—the late Padraic Pearse, Mr. Arthur Griffith and Mr. de Valera correspond to those descriptions—but it is undeniable that Mr. Moore, not without deliberation, has helped to maintain the legend that Irishmen are without a sense of responsibility. When, for example, during one of the many Home Rule crises, he suggested that the trouble between the two islands of Great Britain and Ireland might easily be settled by intelligent engineers, many persons were of the opinion that a man who could talk such twaddle, as they called it, in a time of much difficulty ought to be imprisoned. The proposal, when the details were disclosed, confirmed pessimists in their profound belief that the unsurmountable obstacle to the solution of Irish affairs is the Irish themselves! What Mr. Moore suggested was this: that a thick

wall should be built across the North Channel between the Giant's Causeway and the Mull of Kintyre, and that another thick wall should be built across St. George's Channel between Carnsore Point and St. David's Head. These operations completed, the engineers should then pump out all the water in the Irish Sea, fill in the resultant gap with earth, and make one island out of two! He seemed not to have considered the case of Liverpool. What, some one jestingly demanded, would become of that great port when deprived of its "pool"? What also, he might have added, would become of Belfast and Dublin, deprived, the one of its Lough, and the other, of its Bay? Mr. Moore might have retorted that what Ireland lost on Belfast Lough it would more than gain on Galway Bay, but he preferred to remain silent. One could, of course, draw a conclusion, packed with thought and judgment, from Mr. Moore's playful proposal, and I do not doubt that such was his intention; but the average person is either too busy or disinclined to draw such conclusions from anything; and so, having glanced casually at the details of Mr. Moore's plan to settle the Irish Question, he turned impatiently away, convinced (a)

that Mr. Moore was an incorrigible buffoon, and (b) that the government of Ireland must ever remain an unsolved problem because of the Irish people's amazing inability to conduct themselves reasonably!

But Mr. Moore has a serious purpose in life, and he pursues that serious purpose with indefatigable industry. The immediate and unmistakable fact about him is that he is an artist. There are few writers in English, not even excepting Mr. Conrad, who have so much power over words as is possessed by George Moore, and this power has been achieved, as all power is achieved, by incessant labour and the most pure devotion. He is, in the real sense, a self-made man. The artistry that is undeniably his has been wrought not only in the sweat of his brain, but in face of powerful obstacles. His position as the heir of a fairly well-to-do landowner in Ireland might have resulted in him becoming a minor poet, publishing tiny verses in tiny volumes, or a small author of fragile essays about butterflies and pierrots. He did, in fact, begin his writing career, as most reputable writers do, by composing poems, but he speedily turned to prose. He actually published

verses in books entitled "Flowers of Passion"—a name which incongruously suggests Baudelaire and Ella Wheeler Wilcox—and "Pagan Poems," but, so far as I have been able to discover, no one has ever seen these books or read the poems contained in them. The first was published in 1877 and the second in 1881 and we may conclude that they have been dissolved by the chemicals of time. Miss Mitchell, in the book to which reference has already been made, states that "nobody in Ireland has ever seen any of Mr. Moore's paintings except 'A. E.' to whom he once shyly showed a head, remarking that it had some 'quality.' 'A. E' remained silent." The poems remain under the same kindly condemnation. The favourable fortune which might have made a minor poet, and nothing but a minor poet, out of Mr. Moore was one of the powerful obstacles to his becoming a master of prose.

The other was the attempt made by his father to influence his mind. In the preface from which I have already made a brief quotation, he gives an account of his education at the Roman Catholic school of Oscott. George, it seemed, had a reticence in his childhood which he remarkably lost in

maturity: he refused to confess his sins on the singular ground that he had not got any sins to confess. He had not then learned, seemingly, that he who has not got any sins to confess, can easily invent a few. The story of this episode is fully narrated in "Hail and Farewell," but in the new preface Mr. Moore summarizes it and tells how his father was summoned to Oscott by the president of the school "to inquire into his son's lack of belief in priests and their sacraments." The upshot of the business was that the boy, "not only the last boy in the class, but in the last class in the school—in a word, the dunce of the school" was removed from Oscott for private instruction at home in Mayo. "George's case is really very alarming," the president wrote to his father, and the letter contained the admission that he did not know whether George would not or could not learn.

It is exceedingly illuminating to observe how his prose style has grown through a series of very diverse books into its present condition. One of his most remarkable novels, as it is also one of his earliest, "A Mummers Wife," was clearly written under the influence of Zola, but with such indi-

vidual quality that Zola might profitably have taken lessons from his pupil. The difference between Emile Zola and George Moore is that while Zola never forgot to be a doctrinaire, Moore never forgot to be an artist. "A Mummer's Wife" was unaccountably banned by the circulating libraries in England, and, such is the conservatism of these remarkable institutions, that I believe the ban is still maintained, although a generation has arisen which regards it as very restrained indeed. The style in which it is written is somewhat arid, and the reader is not carried forward by the flow of the story itself, but is forced along by its weight. A comparison between "A Mummer's Wife," or "Esther Waters," and such later books as "The Lake" or "The Brook Kerith" reveals such a difference in manner that the critic has some difficulty in believing that all four novels came from the mind of the same author. Mr. Wells is a writer with many manners, but the reader can discover a unifying characteristic, unmistakably Wellsian, in all of them. Mr. Shaw, a more consistent author than most men of his quality, has kept so closely to one level that the difference between his earliest, his best and his latest work is merely the difference

of degree between growing powers, highest powers and declining powers. The style in the novels, "Love Among the Artists," "The Unsocial Socialist," "The Irrational Knot" and "Cashel Byron's Profession" is the same style, under less control, as the style of "Man and Superman," "John Bull's Other Island," "Heartbreak House" and "Back To Methuselah." But in Mr. Moore's case the style of "A Mummer's Wife" has no obvious relationship to that of "The Lake" or "The Brook Kerith." The difference between the earlier books and the later ones is the difference between the flow of a river through a canal and the flow of a river through its natural bed.

## VI

"A Mummer's Wife" is a powerful story, told in a skilful and impressive fashion, but it leaves the reader less conscious of life than of mechanics. As a piece of construction it is a better novel than "The Brook Kerith," but as a piece of literature it is not. The quality of life is dusty and arranged in the early book, but it is alert and vibrant and natural in the later one. One notable feature

of "A Mummer's Wife" is the display of knowledge by Mr. Moore of things and of places with which one would not expect him to be familiar. His acquaintance with grooms and horse-racing, manifested in "Esther Waters," is understandable in a man who was reared in a country-house where the language of the stable must have been familiar. But how did Mr. Moore obtain his intimacy with the interior of a small draper's and milliner's shop in one of the Five Towns in Staffordshire, together with his knowledge of the details of life lived by a touring theatrical company? Mr. Arnold Bennett's knowledge of the Five Towns and the interior of a small shop is explained by the fact that he was born in such circumstances in one of the Five Towns. Mr. Leonard Merrick's intimate knowledge of the life of a travelling theatrical company is explained by the fact that he was once an actor in such a company. But how did Mr. Moore, the son of a prosperous Irish landowner of aristocratic origin, acquire his close intimacy with the details of such life? It is this aspect of the book which reveals the existence in Mr. Moore of a high faculty which was absent from the mind of his first master, Zola,

the faculty of imagination. Zola made his novels out of things actually witnessed or learned from books, but Mr. Moore made his novels out of his own imagination. Zola could only write about life in a small shop in a small town after he had actually lived in it, but Mr. Moore wrote "A Mummer's Wife," with no more knowledge of Hanley than a person passing through it might possess, and gave his readers an impression of deep intimacy with it.

This book, notable in itself, had a notable result. It was read by a young writer, named Enoch Arnold Bennett, then engaged in journalism and the production of semi-sensational novels. Bennett was a native of "the Five Towns" district, born in a place called Shelton to the north-east of the town of Hanley which is the scene of "A Mummer's Wife." Mr. Bennett himself told me that until he read "A Mummer's Wife" he never thought of writing about "the Five Towns." The Staffordshire people had no literary significance to him until that significance was revealed by "A Mummer's Wife." Mr. Bennett probably exaggerates the extent of his debt to Mr. Moore. He would, sooner or later, have explored the rich mine

from which he produced the ore of "The Old Wives' Tale" and "Clayhanger"—it is ludicrous to imagine that but for the happy accident of reading "A Mummer's Wife" he would never have done so—but it is not improbable that Mr. Moore's story brought him to his proper milieu earlier than he might otherwise have reached it. The reader can profitably entertain himself by comparing "the Five Towns," the places and the people, of "A Mummer's Wife" with "the Five Towns," places and people of "The Old Wives' Tale" and "Clayhanger." The difference between Mr. Moore's account and Mr. Bennett's is the difference between careful and acute observation by an intelligent stranger, alien in birth and tradition and training, and the knowledge, inherited from his forefathers and acquired in childhood and youth, of a native. Mr. Moore had to "mug up" his subject, as schoolboys say, but Mr. Bennett was born with most of it. The description of Hanley in the first chapter of "The Old Wives' Tale" (where it is named Hanbridge by Mr. Bennett) contrasts remarkably with the description of the same town in "A Mummer's Wife," as does the description of a pottery seen through Mr. Bennett's

eyes in "Leonora" with that of a pottery seen through Mr. Moore's eyes in the fourth chapter of "A Mummer's Wife." These differences of description are, of course, the result of a difference in temperament between the two men which is perhaps most clearly revealed in the way in which they portray old women in their books and deal with scenes of suffering. An intelligent reader of "A Mummer's Wife" and "The Old Wives' Tale," having made allowance for the fact that the first-named was written by a young man beginning his career, and the second by a man approaching middle-age and the apex of his power, could draw up a fairly accurate statement of the character of each of the authors by comparing the figure of old Mrs. Ede in Mr. Moore's novel with that of old Mrs. Baines in Mr. Bennett's. The contrast between the scene of suffering pictured in the first chapter of "A Mummer's Wife" and that in the first chapter of "The Old Wives' Tale" would considerably assist him in making the statement. The painful insistence on the details of the asthma which afflicted Mr. Ede is in sharp opposition to the almost jocular fashion in which Mr. Povey's toothache is described. Both books end

with the death of the principal figures. Kate Ede dies disquietly. One might say that Constance and Sophia Baines also die disquietly. But there is a difference in the disquiet. Constance and Sophia had had their share of disappointment and trouble and had lost their illusions, but at least they had had their fill of life, each as she desired it, and if there had been disappointment, there had also been satisfaction: the illusions were lost, but while they lasted they were agreeable. Kate died before she had had her fill of life, without illusions and also, which is worse, without agreeable memories. Youth insists that life is either very gay or very dismal—and "A Mummer's Wife" was written by a young man; but Maturity knows that the colours of life are mingled rather than uniform, and that even when the end is a dismal one, the journey to it has not been without moments of fragrance and pleasure—and "The Old Wives' Tale" was written by a man in his maturity. The similarities between these two books are as interesting as their differences, and a close study of them leaves the reader at once aware of very dissimilar personalities and with enhanced respect for both of them.

## VII

It is when we come to such novels as "The Lake" and "The Brook Kerith" that we discover Mr. Moore at his greatest. Zola is forgotten and only the strength of Mr. Moore himself is now displayed. "The Lake" is among the most beautiful stories of our time, a finely-conceived and finely-wrought book, more complete and unified than "The Brook Kerith," which, in spite of much beauty and scholarship, is marred organically by a dispersal of the interest. The latter novel is in three sections, the first dealing with Joseph of Arimathea, the second with Jesus, and the third with Paul. Each of these sections by itself is well and even superbly done, although in my judgment, the first of them is much the best of the three; but the interest which the reader has in any one of the three sections is not felt in the whole book because the three great figures are not grouped together. We begin with Joseph and then, at the point when we are absorbed in him, are hurried on to Jesus, undergoing a similar experience with Him when we are hurried off to Paul. The book is not a closely-knit drama in

which the characters constantly act and re-act upon each other, but is more akin to three separate plays in which certain figures recur in greater or less positions. Mr. Moore, in short, was uncertain whether to make Joseph or Jesus or Paul the hero of his story, and he unwisely compromised by making each of them hero for a portion of it, with the result that each is of supreme importance for a third of the book and of subordinate importance for the remainder of it. "The Brook Kerith" is, nevertheless, a considerable achievement and is in itself sufficient to secure a high place in English letters for its author.

The legend is that Mr. Moore is a trifler with life, a man without purpose, immensely egotistical, having some of the simplicity of the buffoon. The truth is that he is an audacious, exceedingly adroit and utterly unthwartable artist who bends the visible world to his purpose of discovering and perfecting a formula of words with which to express his vision of the invisible world. He has, indeed, a simplicity of character, but it is not the simplicity of the buffoon: it is the immense and dissolving simplicity of the man of genius.

# BERNARD SHAW

## I

THERE is a kind of shy, embarrassed man of merit who cannot keep or even reach to his proper position in the world without making some sort of pretence about himself. Mr. Bernard Shaw is such a man. He has created his legend with such extraordinary skill that those who know him well have great difficulty in persuading the general public, which has neither the time nor the intelligence to understand a man of marked personality, to believe that the legend *is* a legend, that the reputed Bernard Shaw is not the real Bernard Shaw. The common notion is that he has an insatiable craving for publicity, is immensely conceited and self-centred, and does not care what folly of thought or conduct he commits if by so doing he draws attention to himself. The truth about him is that he is a shy and nervous man, singularly humble-minded and sincere, very courageous and full of quick, penetrating wisdom, and so generous

and kindly that he may be said to be willing to do more for his friends than his friends will do for themselves. He is a Don Quixote without illusions. When he tilts at windmills, he does so because they are *wind*mills in private ownership, and he wishes them to be driven by electricity and owned by the local authority. In print and on platforms, Mr. Shaw brags and boasts and lays claim to an omniscience that would scandalize most deities, but no one who has the ability to distinguish between sincerity and mere capering is in the least deceived by his platform conceit. He is one of the very few men in the world who can brag in public without being offensive to his auditors. He can even insult his audience without hurting its feelings. There is a quality of geniality and kindliness in his most violent and denunciatory utterance that reconciles all but the completely fat-headed to a patient submission to his chastisement; and his most perverse statements are so swiftly followed by things profoundly true and sincerely said that those who listen to him are less conscious of his platform tricks than are those who merely read newspaper reports of his speeches. This is largely due to the fact that the

newspapers print only his flippant and fantastic stuff, and omit his vital matter. I have seen reporters at one of his meetings sitting with their pencils loosely dangling from their fingers while Mr. Shaw spoke wisely and deeply, and then, when he uttered some trivial or outrageous thing, coming to life and hastily scribbling the jape into their notebooks.

It is my purpose here to insist that Mr. Shaw is a shy man with a large element of the gawky school boy in him so that he is awkward and embarrassed when he comes suddenly into the presence of strangers without having been warned that strangers are to be encountered. I have seen him blush like a boy on finding people in a room which he had expected to find unoccupied, and when one meets him casually in the street he is at first nonplussed and without conversation or power to do more than smile amiably. It is not easy to make this shyness of his plain to those who have met him once or twice because he has remarkable powers of recovery and can cover up his initial embarrassment with very great skill; and also because his platform manners are very easy and his general social manners are exceedingly gracious.

He has made many pretences in his life, but the one pretence that he has never succeeded in maintaining is the pretence that he is a bad-mannered man. There are stories told of him that seem to show him in a graceless, even cruel, character, but these are no more than might be expected from a man of nervous temperament who is being bothered excessively by the demands of people who have no right to make demands on him at all. Against those stories may be set far more stories of acts of exceptional kindliness to those who are in trouble or in need of advice and encouragement. Very few great men have given so generously of their time and strength to helping young men of talent to obtain recognition as Mr. Shaw has done.

His awkwardness of manner when taken unawares is very different from that of Mr. Yeats in similar circumstances. Mr. Shaw is shy and awkward with strangers, but Mr. Yeats, who has never been shy in his life, is only awkward. Mr. Shaw, because he is naturally gracious, recovers himself more quickly than Mr. Yeats, who has cultivated his graciousness; and it may be said of them that Mr. Shaw has the manners of a man instinctively gentle, whereas Mr. Yeats has the

manners of a man who has practised deportment before a cheval glass.

## II

It is obvious that a man so shy and easily embarrassed as Mr. Shaw is cannot hope to make a swift impression upon his contemporaries unless he commits an outrage upon his own nature. A world which regards modesty as a sign of incompetence, if not of actual imbecility, is slow to recognize the real merits of a man unless he lays claim to merits which he has not got. In the long run, the crowd pays tribute to great men, but Mr. Shaw was anxious that tribute should be paid to him immediately. Fame at the age of eighty offered few inducements to him, and post humous fame offered no inducements at all. He had some thing to say to a world disinclined to listen to him, and he felt that he could not persuade it to do so unless he first of all performed some unusual platform tricks to catch its attention. Something of his principle seemed to be in the mind of a tipster whom I saw on Epsom racecourse before the war began. I was walking in the crowd on the course,

which the police were not yet clearing, when suddenly a very well-dressed man in my neighbourhood seemed to go out of his mind. He whirled violently round, uttered a fierce yell, flung an expensive silk hat into the air and waved his gold-headed cane in a very disturbing fashion. He then began to chant in a manner not unlike the way in which Mr. Vachel Lindsay recites his poem on the Congo! . . . By the time he had finished this performance, a considerable crowd had collected around him. I was in the forefront of it, and while I was wondering how long it would be before the police arrived to take charge of the demented man, he recovered his sanity and proceeded to sell tips for the two-thirty race. I bought one of them. I put money that was rare and precious on the horse which he commended to my patronage. And the horse lost the race! . . . Mr. Shaw climbed on to platforms and into newspapers, shouting at the top of his voice, "I am better than Shakespeare" in the hope that he might convince the world that he had any merit at all. He performed tricks in public in order to make people believe that he could think in the theatre. He wore comic clothes and refused to shave and conducted a rebellion

against evening dress and silk hats and boiled shirts. He declined to eat meat, to smoke tobacco or to drink wine. He said that he was an atheist and an immoral writer. He tried to train his eyebrows into the shape which is called Mephistophelian. He saw himself in the role of the Fat Boy in "Pickwick Papers" trying to make men's flesh creep, and was disgusted to find that the Fat Boy's most valuable asset, his obesity, had been denied to him and given to Mr. Gilbert Chesterton, who would not make any one's flesh creep for the value of the world! Finally, he announced that he was a Socialist. His Socialism was not a platform trick: it was his serious faith; but it became so associated in the public mind with his platform tricks that he had only to say in public that he was a Socialist and his audience would giggle as if that were the most amusing thing they had ever heard. This habit of performing platform tricks undoubtedly drew a large crowd to listen to him, and he did not fail to deliver himself of his peculiar faith to that crowd when he had collected it; but there were considerable drawbacks to his method of securing attention. The crowd could never quite rid itself of the belief that he was "one of

those comic chaps." It admitted that he was a very clever "comic chap," but firmly at the back of the popular mind was the belief that he did not mean one half of what he said and was not entirely sincere about the remaining half. It liked to see him performing in public, and it paid large sums of money to hear him lecture in behalf of causes that were abhorrent to it. Duchesses, for example, contributed heavily to the funds of Socialist societies simply for the privilege of hearing him speak, and duchesses do not love Socialist societies. The crowd talked about him to a remarkable extent; it read his books; it attended performances of his plays; it went to hear him lecture . . . but it insisted that what was important about him was, not his advocacy of this or that, but his power to excite laughter. When he was most in earnest, the crowd said, "He's so witty!" and left the matter there. That, perhaps, is why "Common Sense and the War" aroused so much wrath in England. The crowd, accustomed to tittering behind its hand or laughing outright at Mr. Shaw's wit, was disconcerted by the serious way in which he dealt with the War in that notorious pamphlet. It was so shocked by what he said that it professed to be

indignant that any man could cut comic capers at so awful a moment. Mr. Shaw was not cutting any capers, comic or otherwise, but the crowd, trained by him to believe that he was a comedian, could not believe that he was capable of being anything else. That pamphlet, ill-timed, perhaps, in some respects, was yet well-timed in this respect, that it reminded the British people of their most priceless privilege, the right of free speech. The whole of the British press collapsed before the Press Censor, and editors were afraid to open their mouths about things which were scandalous. Mr. Shaw restored the freedom of the press. He said what he had to say and he said it with the utmost courage and force, and within a week or two from the date of publication of his pamphlet, the timid editors were rearing up their heads and daring to say "Bo!" to the political geese.

There were times, perhaps, when he seemed to be yielding to the mob's desire to be tickled, when the one thing apparently that moved him was his delight in making the crowd giggle and guffaw; and now and then his friends felt that he was overdoing the tricks, that he was monotonously informing people that he was "better than Shakespeare,"

a statement that seemed as idle as if Anatole France were to say that he was "better than" Victor Hugo, when in fact the men are so dissimilar that there is no means of comparing them. But the danger, such as it was, amounted to little, for when all the discount is made that can be made for possible charlatanry in his character, there remains this indisputable fact that he has left a mark on the thought and life not only of the English-speaking world, but of the whole of Western civilization, which cannot be eradicated. We may go to the theatre to laugh at Mr. Shaw, but we remain to think with him.

## III

Oddly enough, there was another dramatist, also an Irishman, whose practice was precisely the opposite of Mr. Shaw's: a shy, nervous man who permitted himself to be cheated of a position of authority because of his modesty. John Millington Synge was what Mr. Shaw might have been had he allowed his nature to run off to dark corners and hide itself. Synge could not compel himself to climb on to platforms or make extravagant boasts.

He may have had the desire to make boasts, but he had not the courage to do so. An excellent comrade for an individual on a country road, he was so nervous in the presence of an audience of more than six people that he was in danger of physical sickness, and he may be said to have died of sheer inability to assert himself. Had it not been that Mr. Yeats was by to do Synge's boasting for him, the world might never have heard of that singular man of twisted talent. Mr. Yeats, indeed, boasted so loudly of Synge's gifts that superficial persons began to believe that Synge was the greater man of the two, and I remember on one occasion hearing young women, fresh from Newnham, boldly declaring that Mr. Yeats's chief title to remembrance would lie in the fact that he had discovered Synge! I have never been able to convince myself that Synge was a great man of genius; it is not necessary to convince oneself that Mr. Yeats is a great man of genius: the fact is obvious. Synge was a man of peculiar and interesting talent whose work smelt too strongly of the medicine bottle to be of supreme merit. He was the sick man in literature, and he had the sick man's interest in cruelty and harshness and violent temperaments.

He had the weak man's envy of strength and the weak man's tendency to mistake violence for strength. His plays are better than Mr. Yeats's plays—"Riders to the Sea" is immeasurably better than "Kathleen ni Houlihan"—but Mr. Yeats is a greater poet than Synge was a dramatist. I am disinclined to believe that Synge was a *great* dramatist. He brought a desirable element of bitterness and acrid beauty into the sticky mess of self-satisfaction and sentimentalism which is known as Irish Literature, but I feel that he was lacking in staying-power. He shot his bolt when he wrote "The Playboy of the Western World," the chief value of which lay in the fact that it ripped up the smugness of the Irish people, than whom there are no other people in the world so pleased with themselves on such slender grounds, and taught them the much-needed lesson that they are very like the rest of God's creatures. Synge portrayed the Irish people faithfully as he saw them: he put in the element of poetry in the Celtic character, but he also put in the element of cruelty; he put in the wit and generosity, but he also put in the dullness and the greed; he put in the gallantry, but he also put in the cowardice; he put in the no-

bility, but he also put in the gross brutality. In other words, he saw at the same time the idealism of Padraic Pearse and Thomas MacDonagh permeated by the incredible brutality of De Valera's ruffians. He knew the delicate sense of beauty which suffuses the poetry of Mr. Padraic Colum and he smelt the odour of the charnel-house that rises from the work of Mr. James Joyce, and had he been able to keep the two sides of Irish character justly poised, he would have been a great man of genius; but he was not able to keep the balance between them. He tended more and more to see merit in cruelty and harshness, and he turned away from the sensitive and delicate beauty of Mr. Colum to the sewer-revelations of Mr. Joyce, who may fitly be described as Rabelais after a nervous breakdown. People tell me that "Deirdre of the Sorrows," his unfinished play, is the greatest of all the plays that have been written about that unhappy and romantic lady; and perhaps what they say is true, for none of the plays that have been written about her, Mr. Herbert Trench's or "A. E.'s" or Mr. Yeats's, are in the great line, though all of them are interesting. But judged by itself or in relation to plays generally, it does not seem

to me to be a great drama nor is it so meritable as some of Synge's own plays of earlier origin. It marks to me the limit of his range, and shows signs of drooping energy. Some may say that I am attributing to failing powers what should be attributed to sickness and the imminence of death, but I think I am dealing justly with this odd intruder into the realm of letters when I say that his talent was a small one and that had he lived for twice as many years as he actually did live, he would not have produced anything of greater note than he had written when he died.

## IV

Platform tricks saved Mr. Shaw from falling to the Synge level. Contact with rude men and ruder women in public places kept him in familiar alliance with normal things, and so it came about that his genius, though it soared, never soared out of sight. He marched ahead of the crowd, but he never went so far ahead of it that it could not catch up with him. He urged reluctant men and women to follow him along the paths that were obscure and difficult, but he never urged them to

try a path which he had not himself explored, or was unwilling to explore. Not all of his advice was accepted . . . not all of it was worthy of acceptance . . . but all of it, accepted or rejected, was listened to. He would have found a readier agreement to take his advice if he had been less logical in his arguments, but his mind governs his life so completely that he cannot make any allowances for the wayward character of the average man. He has given himself so completely to his mind that his feelings seem to have atrophied. He is incapable, apparently, of understanding the beauty and fascination of mere irrelevancy. A study of his work reveals no consciousness on his part of natural beauty. He seems not to know that a tree is a lovely thing, that its loveliness is entirely without moral or sociological significance. He would probably agree with Dr. Johnson that one field is very like another field, that water in one part of the world is identical with water in another part of the world . . . and would be just as remote from the truth as Dr. Johnson was: for one field is not like another field, and water in one place can be very dissimilar in look from water in some other place. Mr. Shaw would not suffer

one pang at the destruction of St. Paul's Cathedral if he felt that its destruction made the processes of life more convenient to the ordinary citizen. If he had to choose between Rheims Cathedral and an improved drainage system for France . . . a thing which France very badly needs, as any one with a nose can tell . . . he would choose the drainage system. The College of Cardinals is less lovely in the eyes of Mr. Shaw than the members of a Borough Council. He would rather possess a good fountain-pen than the first folio of Shakespeare's plays. There was a man in Dublin who singularly resembled him in everything except wit. Francis Sheehy Skeffington, who was wrongly executed in the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916, had Mr. Shaw's logical faculty without Mr. Shaw's redeeming wit. He was a very honest, courageous, and personally attractive man, just as Mr. Shaw is, but he was also a very wrong-headed man and totally incapable of any sort of concerted action with other people. Mr. Shaw's wit brings him into more cordial relationship with other human beings than Sheehy Skeffington would ever have achieved. I remember, just before the war began, meeting Skeffington in North Wales. He, too, was insensible

to natural beauty and was without respect for tradition or ancient institutions. I took him one evening to a lake in Anglesey where many reeds grew. I asked him to watch while I clapped my hands, and when I had done so, thousands of starlings flew out of the reeds with a great fluttering of wings, making a tremendous disturbance because they had been roused from their sleep. Skeffington gazed at these birds as if he had never seen a starling before. I judged by the look of astonishment in his face that if he could have persuaded himself to believe in magic, he would have regarded me as a magician. By merely smiting my hands, I had filled the air with fluttering birds! This experience so interested me that I decided to make other experiments with Skeffington, and so, on the following day, I took him to a field outside the village where some very fine druidical remains were to be seen. I led him up to the stones and waited to see what effect they would have upon him. He looked at them for a few moments, and then, quite unmoved by the fact that they had been standing there for more than a thousand years and were all that was left of an ancient religion, he took a piece of paper from his pocket and, mur-

muring in his high-pitched Ulster voice, "I think I'll do a little propaganda!" thrust it into a crevice of the old altar. The paper had VOTES FOR WOMEN on it! He was totally incapable of understanding why this act of his disgusted me. His mind was indifferent to such things as tradition; he simply could not visualize those stones as anything other than a remarkably useful hoarding on which to advertise his latest enthusiasm. I suppose that if he thought of the druids at all, he thought contemptuously of them as barbarians to whom had been denied the enlightenment that he enjoyed; and his desperately logical mind, working on the fact that many persons would visit these remains, suggested to him that here was an excellent opportunity of thrusting his propaganda upon the attention of people reluctant to give any heed to it! . . .

I cannot conceive of Mr. Shaw doing just that thing because his wit would save him from it; but I feel that if his wit were taken from him or had been denied to him, he would have behaved exactly as Sheehy Skeffington behaved then. It is his superb, spontaneous wit that keeps him in continuous contact with normal men. Synge had no

wit, and because he had not, was thrust into solitude. Skeffington had no wit . . . there never was on earth a man so destitue of a sense of humour as Francis Skeffington . . . and because he had not, he lived a life of intellectual isolation from his fellows in spite of the fact that most people liked him. Skeffington's courage and honesty . . . and I have known few men so courageous and honest as he was . . . served him partly, but not wholly, as Mr. Shaw's wit serves him. Mr. Shaw has great intellectual courage and is a very honest man, but these qualities, though they win respect in the long run, have an isolating effect on a man in such a world as this, and were it not for his wit, he would be an Ishmael, too. Take the wit from Mr. Shaw and the courage from Sheehy Skeffington, substitute for them a fractious sense of beauty, and the result is . . . John Millington Synge.

## V

Mr. Chesterton has illustrated the peculiar quality of the English mind by comparing the roads of France with the roads of England; and the com-

parison might be used to illustrate the difference between the mind of Mr. Shaw and the mind of the average man. Mr. Chesterton, with that startling profundity that is to be discovered in much of his writing that seems at first merely to be conjuring stuff, asserts that the design of English and French roads, the first all winding and irregular, the second straight as if drawn with the aid of a ruler, shows a fundamental difference between the two races: the English as wayward and casual as their roads, going lazily and easily to their journey's end; the French as logical and well-defined as their roads, going without any circumlocution to their journey's end. Mr. Shaw's mind goes directly to its goal, and he tries to persuade the rest of mankind to follow his example. But the rest of mankind does not wish to go by the most direct route to any goal: it wants to dally on the ways; it wants to explore all the little bye-paths and hidden corners; it even wants to turn back on its course to examine again some place that it has already seen; and above all, it wants to waste time. When Mr. Shaw contemplates the world engaged in this careless way of living, he bursts into a passion of wit where less gifted men, such as Sheehy Skeffington, would

burst into anger; and he lashes the world with his tongue. Mankind, because Mr. Shaw is a genius, listens to him, as mankind always has listened to men of genius, in a puzzled fashion, and even speculates on whether it ought not to follow his advice; but it is in the nature of man to be illogical, and so, after a little thought, man goes on being wayward and casual. Even in France, where logic has become an obsession, men are more illogical than Mr. Shaw would have them be; and it is a very curious commentary on his work that in so logical a country as France, his plays make far less stir than in any other country in Europe. I imagine that the French are so cursed with logic that their minds revolt from the extreme reasoning of Mr. Shaw as an overloaded stomach revolts from rich food. Once, in France, when my battalion was marching along a road towards a part of the country in which we had been some weeks before, I heard a soldier in my platoon saying to his comrade as we came to familiar places, "Thank God, they've cut down those bloody trees!" and immediately I understood why the French roads bored the British soldier. That inexorable logic, all that neatness, those terribly straight roads with

the trees growing at regular intervals . . . "dressing by the right" as the soldiers said, and looking as if the men who planted them had performed the operation according to some mathematical formula . . . all these things, inhumanly tidy and well-ordered, nauseated the mind. I have done much walking on English and French roads, and I will wager that boredom will seize the traveller on a French road long before his interest on an English road has been exhausted. And in their unintellectual, instinctive, wayward fashion, the English are more right about life than the French are. Mr. Shaw, I imagine, is incapable of understanding the state of mind of my soldier who thanked God that the neatly-arranged trees on the neatly-designed French road had been cut down. To him it would seem right that if trees are to be grown at all, they should be grown according to formula. He sees something stupid and wrong in the English method of planting an acorn in any hole that is visible and letting the tree grow as it pleases.

## VI

In the chapter on Mr. Wells, I have printed an account of Mr. Shaw's religious faith which ought properly to be printed here, but since the reader can more easily turn to the next chapter than I can re-write it, I will leave the account where it is and proceed with an account of the latest developments of this faith as set forth in "Heartbreak House" and "Back to Methusaleh." These two plays are notable for a growth of religious conviction in their author which has brought him to a condition resembling, in the eyes of some, that of John the Baptist and, in the eyes of others (as I heard a clergyman of the Church of Ireland angrily assert) that of a religious fanatic. They are also notable for a weakening of technical skill as a dramatist. Mr. Shaw has set himself so ably to the task of rejecting drama from his plays, that unconsciously he ruins the effect of his lines by an excess of garrulity. No one, reading and particularly seeing, "Heartbreak House" and "Back to Methusaleh" can escape from the belief that Mr. Shaw is using more words than are necessary to express his thought. Either he despises us as

people who are not sufficiently intelligent to understand his meaning unless it is delivered to us in a variety of sentences or he has lost his artistic sense and cannot understand that a fine morning is not any finer for being described somewhat in this fashion: "A fine morning is one on which the sun shines from a blue sky in which occasional white clouds may be seen. *This* morning is such a morning as that. Therefore, this is a fine morning. What a fine morning!" The whole of that extravagant speech, invented by me, not by Mr. Shaw, is contained in the last four words. The rest is not only excess, but insult, for it implies an ignorance in the person listening to it which is not human. There are many passages in these two plays which are not unlike that invented passage of mine. There is a passage near the beginning of the second act of "Heartbreak House" which seems to me to indicate a real decline in Mr. Shaw's sense of the theatre. Ellie Dunn and Boss Mangan, to whom she is thinking of getting engaged, are discussing themselves and marriage. He has just described himself in terms which show that he is one of those financial ruffians who are the

modern equivalent, (not of highwaymen, for they were gay and adventurous fellows,) but of slave-drivers:

MANGAN. . . . Now what do you think of me, Miss Ellie?

ELLIE (*dropping her hands*): How strange! that my mother, who knew nothing at all about business, should have been quite right about you! She always said—not before papa, of course, but to us children—that you were just that sort of a man.

MANGAN (*sitting up much hurt*): Oh! did she? And yet she'd have let you marry me.

ELLIE: Well, you see, Mr. Mangan, my mother married a very good man—for whatever you may think of my father as a man of business, he is the soul of goodness—and she is not at all keen on my doing the same.

The parenthetical clause in each of Ellie's speeches is unnecessary, and in the second speech, it has the effect of ruining a very good "line." I assert, as a dramatist with some technical skill, that Ellie's second speech, minus the parenthetical clause, will rouse laughter every time it is spoken. I assert, with equal confidence, that this speech, *with* the parenthetical clause, will not provoke more than a strangled laugh and may not provoke

any laughter at all. Mr. Shaw is entitled to reject laughter if he thinks it is likely to destroy the thought in his speech, but no one can believe that the parenthetical clause to which I object adds anything to Ellie's thought. It is mere redundance, and redundance is destructive of drama. It is also destructive of thought for a man is more likely to be irritated than to be stimulated by hearing a thing repeated to excess.

I may, perhaps, note another matter of technical interest to the student of the Shavian drama, namely, Mr. Shaw's economy in characters. He has or had a strong sense of the theatre which is almost as strong as that possessed by Mr. Galsworthy. The difficulty a critic has in estimating Mr. Shaw's sense of the theatre is increased by the wilfulness with which he rejects technique: one is not always able to decide whether the lack of technique in the later plays is the result of intention or weakness. Mr. Galsworthy is nearly the cleverest technician now writing for the English theatre. He cannot think as clearly as Mr. Shaw can, but he can construct much better. When Mr. Galsworthy treats a theme dramatic in

itself, such as the theme of "Loyalties," and does not entangle the drama with arguments, he writes an uncommonly good play. "Loyalties" has been called a "crook" play and in a sense it is one, but the difference between it and such a piece as "The Bat" by Mrs. Mary Roberts Rinehart and Mr. Avery Hopwood is the difference between a crook play written in terms of reality and a crook play written in terms of trick. When, however, Mr. Galsworthy treats a theme not dramatic in itself, such as the theme of "Windows," and entangles any drama it has with much argument, the result is something extraordinarily diffuse and nebulous. Mr. Galsworthy leaves you with a sensation, not only that you do not know what he means, but also that *he* does not know what he means. Mr. Shaw, in his later pieces, leaves you with the sensation that he knows only too well what he means, but he will never admit that you are capable of understanding him. His economy in characters is a certain sign of his mysticism. Mr. Yeats told me on one occasion that when Sir Horace Plunkett invited "A. E." to take a prominent position in the organization of co-operative agriculture in Ireland, Mr. Arthur Balfour commended

the choice on the ground that a mystic is the most practical of men since he is willing to use any instrument that will serve his purpose, whereas your plain, blunt business man, destitute of imagination and firm purpose, will quarrel with his tools and end up by botching his job. The mystic, moreover, serves his purpose more than himself, whereas your plain, blunt business man serves only himself. Mr. Shaw's method of working is singularly interesting as a demonstration of the way in which the mystic achieves his purpose. I do not know of any writer who is so thrifty with his means as Mr. Shaw. Shakespeare, compared with him, is a prodigal and a spendthrift. Mr. Shaw, compared with Shakespeare, is a miser, uniquely stingy. But it is not stinginess which has made Mr. Shaw so economical in his characters and even in his situations. It is his mysticism which makes him extraordinarily indifferent to his means. Any old plot, however disreputable it might be, would serve Shakespeare for drawing on to the stage a crowd of dissimilar persons and enriching their lives with his verse; and any old character, however remote from human semblance will serve Mr. Shaw as a vent for opinions.

Shakespeare primarily was interested in people. Mr. Shaw primarily is interested in doctrine. The principal difference between a dramatist who is interested in people and a dramatist who is interested in doctrines, is that the former will delight in the creation of the greatest variety of characters whereas the latter will not trouble to create a new character if an old one will do. I doubt whether there are more than twelve distinct persons in the whole of Mr. Shaw's work. When he began his career as a dogmatist, he set himself to writing novels, but found after he had written five, of which only four have been published, that he could not use this instrument so effectively for his purpose as he could use the instrument of the play. And so he turned his attention to the stage. But he did not waste his novels: he dramatised them. He lifted passages from his books and put them into his plays. He took some of the novel-characters and, after he had tidied them and changed their names, forced them from between their covers on to the stage. There is little in the thirty-eight plays he has written which is not to be found, developed or suggested, in his four novels. He has preached one doctrine all his life,

and has preached it with singular consistency. It is set out in the succeeding chapter to this one. The parsimoniousness with which it has been preached is remarkable. The whole of the first act of "Major Barbara" is almost identically a repetition of the first act of "You Never Can Tell." Lady Britomart Undershaft, of the first piece, is Mrs. Clandon, of the second, under another name. The situation of two women is nearly the same. They are living apart from their husbands whom they have not seen for a number of years. Lady Britomart and Mrs. Clandon have each two daughters and a son with the haziest or no recollections of their fathers. A meeting between the two parents and their children is arranged, in each case, on a flimsy pretext. Lady Britomart, like Mrs. Clandon, is one of those strong-minded, silly women who flourish, nowadays, more commonly in America than in England. (She is the sort of dense female who belongs to the Lucy Stone League and refuses to bear the name of the man she has chosen to be her husband although she is willing to bear the name of the man whom she did not choose to be her father!) Lady Britomart, like Mrs. Clandon, has abandoned her husband for a

particularly fatuous cause. Mr. Crampton (for Mrs. Clandon is really Mrs. Crampton) was deprived of his wife's society (which was probably no great loss) and that of his children (which probably was) because he very properly spanked his elder daughter when she had been naughty. Lady Britomart left her husband because he declined to change the basis of his armaments-factory in the interests of his son. Her excuse for her behaviour was more natural than Mrs. Clandon's excuse for hers, for we are all susceptible to the attractions of primogeniture; but a more sensible woman might have achieved her purpose in being less headstrong. Barbara Undershaft, her elder daughter, is Gloria Clandon, a little older and less priggish. Sarah Undershaft, her younger daughter, is a chastened and spiritless Dolly Clandon. There is a difference, however, between Stephen Undershaft and Philip Clandon so remarkable that I can only surmise that Mr. Shaw in transferring the Clandon family into the Undershaft family mislaid Philip and, in searching for him, discovered another youth, this Stephen, who was the product of an illicit love affair between Mrs. Clandon and the austere Finch McComas! Adolphus Cusins, the

Professor of Greek who beats the big drum in the Salvation Army so that he may be near to Barbara, is Valentine, the dentist, dragged out of "You Never Can Tell," after a brief and misguided career as John Tanner in "Man and Superman."

It is easy, I think, to trace the life of each one of the twelve Shavian characters in this fashion. Consider, for example, the vivid and very interesting career of that brutal ruffian, Bill Walker, in "Major Barbara." Bill began his life in "Widowers' Houses" under the name of Lickcheese and flourished so well as a speculative property-owner that he was able to climb into middle-class society, under the name of Burgess, and marry his daughter Candida to the Reverend James Mavor Morell. His association with the clergy, however, must have had a disastrous effect on him for we find him, in "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," leading an adventurous, but misunderstood, career under the name of Drinkwater. Religion had peculiar allurements for Drinkwater, understandably enough when one remembers his former association with his son-in-law, the clergyman, and we are not surprised, therefore, to find him in the Salvation Army's West Ham Shelter,

now named Bill Walker and looking less than his years. He suffers terribly from the spiritual garrulity of Major Barbara. The reader who is familiar with the play will remember that Bill cruelly misused a little Salvation Army lass, called Jenny Hill, who *would* keep on praying for him and turning the other cheek. He struck her on the mouth and twisted her arm and almost tore her hair out by the roots. She cried with the pain, but she went on praying for him! . . . Then Major Barbara twisted Bill's heart for him as cruelly as he had twisted Jenny Hill's arm, by preaching with terrible iteration the doctrine of forgiveness and non-resistance. We know how Bill, at the penultimate moment, escaped from the penitent form, but few of us realise what happened to him after he had fled, precipitately and full of bitter cynicism, from that Salvation Army Shelter in West Ham. Who could have believed, after witnessing his behaviour in the presence of Barbara and snivelling Jenny Hill, that Jenny Hill herself would be the means of his undoing in the wilds of America to which he had hurried under the name of Blanco Posnet? And here we discover a characteristic example of Mr. Shaw's sardonic hu-

mour. For Bill was nabbed, not by the strong Barbara, not even by the weak, though willing, Jenny, but by Jenny's helpless, croup-stricken child. The lion is caught by the mouse; the strong are brought down by the weak; a little child shall lead them into a trap. God, in Mr. Shaw's religion, is not a just God: he is a God determined to have His own way and entirely indifferent to the desires of His creatures. If man will not help God to fulfil His purpose, then God will destroy man and invent another and more submissive instrument whereby He may do so. Such is the Shavian gospel. In what respect does it differ from the most devastating and blasting form of Calvinism? When I was a child in Belfast, I was taught that if I persisted in being a wicked boy, I would be roasted for ever in a red-hot hell. Is there any real difference between the Calvinist who tells a child that he will be burned for all eternity and Mr. Shaw who tells it that it will be scrapped for all eternity. There is one difference, in favour of the Calvinist. I was taught to believe in the All-Perfection of God. Even if I persisted in being a wicked child and thus damned myself for ever, my relatives could

comfort themselves with the reflection that God would fulfil Himself in His own time. Somewhere, somewhen, there would be "peace, perfect peace." But Mr. Shaw's God offers no such guarantee. He cannot assure us, even if we help Him by every means in our power, that He will ever become perfect. He makes inexorable demands upon our service, but cannot offer us any hope that our labour will not be in vain. Serve me without question or be scrapped, says the Shavian God, but he will not assure us that we are not being bilked. And is not the desolation of desolations a religious faith in which there is no certainty and very little hope? I prefer the romantic delusions of my Ulster forefathers to the practical religion of Mr. Shaw. I dislike the thought that I may be roasted for ever in a red-hot hell, but I like even less the coal-black nullity with which Mr. Shaw threatens me if I persist in my evil courses. There will at least be colour and excitement in Calvin's hell, but there will be nothing whatever in Mr. Shaw's. And I am not sure, after all, that God, Perfect or Imperfect, will not prefer to spend eternity in the company of people like me who decline to accept life on any but their

own terms, rather than in the society of servile instruments.

Mr. Shaw's thirty-eight plays are not thirty-eight separate plays but one long, continuous piece, in which his twelve characters, in every conceivable disguise and situation, strive to elude the hand of God but are nabbed by Him in the end. Twist how you may, He'll get you in the end, unless, indeed, He wearies of trying to make use of you, when, inexorably, without a pang, He will cast you on to the scrap-heap where you will perish utterly as your little brothers, the mammoth beasts, perished long ago.

## VII

Mr. Shaw has some of Shakespeare's carelessness over details. I have sometimes wondered why Claudius succeeded to his brother's throne when Hamlet was alive to do so. There is an explanation of this curious succession in Frazer's "The Golden Bough," but I do not suppose that the facts cited by Sir James Frazer were known to Shakespeare and even if it were, he has not made the matter dramatically clear. Hamlet does not ap-

pear to resent his uncle's accession to the throne of Denmark. His resentment is roused by the marriage of his mother to her brother-in-law. He probably never liked his uncle, but he is willing to live in his castle as his heir. Shakespeare was always ready to sacrifice verisimilitude to dramatic effects. Ophelia, for example, is denied complete Christian burial because the Church authorities suspect her of having committed suicide, although the account of her death clearly establishes that she was accidentally drowned through the breaking of a branch. Hamlet, too, is unaware of Ophelia's death or dementia when he arrives in the graveyard where she is to be buried, although he has been in the company of Horatio for some time, and Horatio is fully acquainted with the circumstances of Ophelia's misfortunes and death and knows that there have been passages of love between Hamlet and her. Very little trouble was needed to put these minor matters right, but when a god is creating a universe, he is unlikely to trouble himself greatly about specks of dust. Mr. Shaw shows himself equally indifferent to details when they no longer serve his purpose. He has been charged with spoofing his audience on occa-

sion, notably in the first act of "Man and Superman" where he trumps up a case of impending maternity for shocking effects, and then, his purpose achieved, says no more about it for the remainder of the play! He brings the Undershaft family together in the first act of "Major Barbara" in the pretence that they are about to discuss important questions of family finance which are never once discussed during the act! I do not believe that Mr. Shaw had any intention of spoofing his audience when he invented these situations. He simply did not bother about the details. He had used the effect for his purpose, and since it was no longer servicable to him, he scrapped it without even troubling to clear away the debris—which, presumably, is what His God will do with us when He no longer needs us. Less happens in the first act of "Major Barbara" than in any other first act by Mr. Shaw. It is a protasis from which all mention of plot is deliberately omitted. Bottom, had he been at Mr. Shaw's elbow while the play was being written, might have begged him to "grow to a point," but Bottom would have had less success with Mr. Shaw than he had with Quince,

for Bottom's point was a dramatic one, whereas Mr. Shaw's is doctrinal; and a propounder of doctrine pays little heeds to the laws of stagecraft or anything else. The mystic gets his way because he can neither be frightened nor disconcerted. Death and Tradition have no terrors for him. That is why, in face of the opposition of common sense and practical experience, he always does what he wants to do.

## VIII

One might profitably compare Mr. Shaw to Cassius in "Julius Cæsar." Marcus Brutus, in that play, is surely the prototype of all muddlers and gentlemanly idiots. It was he who, against the pleas of Cassius, insisted that the life of Mark Anthony should be spared. It was he who, disregarding the dissuasions of Cassius, permitted Anthony to speak in the forum. It was he who, over-ruling the arguments of Cassius, ordered the disastrous march to Phillipi. Cassius was the wise man of the two, though his heart was made impotent by his asperities. The resemblance be-

tween him and Mr. Shaw must not be drawn too closely, but it is sufficient, as stated in Shakespeare's terms, to be interesting:

> He reads much;
> He is a great observer, and he looks
> Quite through the deeds of men.

Cassius, of course, loved no plays and heard no music and smiled with difficulty; and these disabilities prevent him from complete ancestry to Mr. Shaw; but, if, like Cassius, Mr. Shaw sometimes feels that he has lived "to be but mirth and laughter to his Brutus," he can, like Cassius again, comfort himself with the thought that he was in the right when Brutus was in the wrong, and that he told him so. His Cassius mood is plainest in "Heartbreak House." This play is described as "a Fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes," and was written, presumably, after Mr. Shaw had witnessed performances of plays by Chekhov. That is not to say, however, that there is any resemblance between the work of Mr. Shaw and the Russian dramatist. There isn't. Mr. Shaw is as talkative as Chekhov was reticent. Chekhov's purpose is to make his people say as little as pos-

sible: Mr. Shaw's purpose is to make his people say a great deal more than is necessary. Chekhov suggests *inactivity* through dialogue: Mr. Shaw suggests argumentativeness. Chekhov writes drama: Mr. Shaw debates. No receptive person can come away from a performance of "The Cherry Orchard" unimpressed by a vision of life. A moderately-intelligent person, having seen this play with eyes of understanding, could write a true summary of the state of Russia in the last hundred years. I doubt whether as much can be said of "Heartbreak House," the whole action of which (though *action* is an inappropriate word to use about it) takes place in the course of an afternoon and evening, inside six or seven hours, in England soon after the outbreak of the War. There is, however, no mention of the War in the play, and the only link between them is the sudden interruption of the conversation in the last act by an air-raid, as a result of which two of the characters are blown to pieces. There is some clumsiness in the use of this device for ending the play, artistically at all events, though that is a consideration which is unlikely to move Mr. Shaw much, but, ethically and socially, it is not clumsy at all, for "Heart-

break House" is less a play than a parable. The bombs drop as suddenly, and with as little warning, on the gifted conversationalists sitting in the dusky garden as the War burst upon Europe in 1914. There we were, all of us, living pleasantly, as Burke begged us to live, and committing our affairs into the hands of men concerning whose abilities to conduct them we had no certificates—and suddenly the ship ran on to the rocks, the train went off the rails, the ceiling fell. "I'm always expecting something," says Ellie Dunn in the last act. "I don't know what it is; but life must come to a point some time." And while she and her companions are arguing about the responsibility for the mess in which the world is, bombs drop out of heaven and life comes to a full stop:

HECTOR: And this ship that we are all in? This soul's prison we call England?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER: The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditch-water; and the crew is gambling in the forcastle. She will strike and sink and split. Do you think the laws of God will be suspended in favour of England because you were born in it?

HECTOR: Well, I don't mean to be drowned like a rat in a trap. I still have the will to live. What am I to do?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER: Do? Nothing simpler. Learn your business as an Englishman.

HECTOR: And what may my business as an Englishman be, pray?

CAPTAIN SHOTOVER: Navigation. Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned.

In other words of Mr. Shaw's, if you do not help God to perfect Himself, He will scrap you. This play, in some respects the best that Mr. Shaw has written, is full of mad laughter, of bitter, self-mocking, torturing laughter. I knew a man who burst into shrieks of laughter when he saw a comrade blown into the air by a German shell; but if any one imagines that that man's terrible mirth came from an unkindly heart, he imagines without understanding; for "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness." I feel about "Heartbreak House" exactly as I felt about my friend who laughed when his comrade was blown up and dismembered: that here is a depth of feeling which cannot be fathomed. Like Job, Mr. Shaw cries out, "changes and war are against me," but, unlike Job, he finds no comfort in the end. "If men will not learn until their lessons are written in blood, why, blood

they must have, their own for preference." As for him, he throws up the sponge. Our culture is but the plaything of fribbles; our democracy is merely government of fools by fools. "The question is," said Boswell to Dr. Johnson and Mr. Cambridge, "which is worst, one wild beast or many?" And the answer, in Mr. Shaw's terms, is "Both!" He sees man, according to this play, refusing to help God to perfect Himself, deliberately thwarting God, and he almost sees him already on the scrap-heap.

In "Back to Methusaleh," he seems to me to have suffered a spiritual set-back, and to be pre-occupied by material considerations. We are no longer concerned with Man's Destiny and God's Purpose, but with matters of mere longevity. "So much to do—so little time in which to do it!" If man could live for three hundred or three thousand or thirty thousand years, he would then have time in which to profit by his experience—so Mr. Shaw's argument seems to run. But would he? Do any of us profit by our experience? If we could go back to the beginning of our lives and start again with the knowledge we had acquired in

the previous existence, we might be able to avoid this or that mistake. But we cannot do that. Each experience is a new one, and the wisdom we have gained from those through which we have passed is of little help to us in dealing with the new one, particularly if it comes upon us, as most of the critical events of life do come upon us, unexpectedly, without warning. There is not much difference, except physically, between the Mr. Shaw who wrote "Candida" and the Mr. Shaw who wrote "Back to Methusaleh," and I do not believe that he would be much, if any different, at the age of three hundred or thirty thousand from what he now is. Man may develop this or that aspect of himself more than another, but essentially he remains the same. It is not length of years that is important to us, but what we do in them. Keats and Shelley were young when they died: Tennyson was old; but the length of their years seems immaterial to their reputation. Mr. Shaw tells us that if we *will* hard enough, we can achieve longevity, but, apart from the fact that longevity first happens in his play to people who have not willed it, but had it thrust upon them, I am puzzled to understand how Mr. Shaw expects mankind to

will a state of existence which, portrayed by him, is extraordinarily repellent. I do not wish to be born at the age of seventeen out of an egg so that I may become a He-Ancient and live for thousands of years in a state of inactive ratiocination. And if a life of thought without action does not attract my fancy, how can I be expected to aspire to it? I cannot find anything in the long lives of Mr. Shaw's characters which seems to me likely to excite the desire and hope of mankind. The He-Ancients and the She-Ancients are morose and sterile, ugly and unsociable, hairless and unhappy, liable to death by discouragement, long, lean and hopeless. I would rather be scrapped! . . . Nor is there any greater virtue in the long-lived than there is in us. In "The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman" (the fourth act of "Back to Methusaleh") where mankind is divided into two classes, the long-lived and the short-lived, we discover that the long-lived spend their three hundred years of existence in humbugging the short-lived. . . . Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down, like a flower: he fleeth as it were a shadow, and

never continueth in one place; but, in spite of his misery and the shortness of his life, he gets more fun and satisfaction than are likely to be enjoyed by man that is born out of an egg.

## IX

I remember very vividly the first occasion on which I saw and heard Mr. Shaw. He was lecturing on "Some Necessary Repairs to Religion" to a religious organization, now defunct, called "The Guild of St. Mathew." His lecture was extraordinarily startling to a young man, fresh from Belfast and still influenced by his fathers' faith, although in revolt against much of it. When the lecture was over, a lady asked him to say what his belief was about the Resurrection, and he replied, that if she would promise not to tell any one, he would say that he did not believe it ever took place. And then came one of those strange lapses from serious argument which are characteristic of him. Another questioner asked him if he believed in the Immaculate Conception. "Of course I do," he said. "I believe that all conceptions are immaculate!" The questioner was so paralysed by this

reply that she sat down without pointing out to him that the Catholic Church believes in the Immaculate Conception on the assumption that all conceptions are not immaculate. On many occasions, Mr. Shaw has brilliantly dodged the point in that manner; but they are not occasions that need be remembered against him. Ever and always he has given his best and hardest thought to the service of mankind. He has practiced what he preaches, and if we are thrown on the scrap-heap, it will not be because Mr. Shaw has failed to do his uttermost to help God to realise Himself. What a shock it will be to him to find that the scrap-heap is a more likeable place than his God's heaven!

## X

He is greatly generous to young men. Like most of my contemporaries I have imposed upon his good nature very often. I sent "Jane Clegg" and "John Ferguson" in manuscript to him and asked him if he would read them and tell me what his opinion of them might be. Probably a dozen or more young men were doing exactly the same

thing with their MSS. He could spend the whole of his time reading other men's plays, if he were to let his good nature go uncontrolled. But he read my plays and wrote long, valuable letters of advice about them to me. I hesitate to mention this fact lest it should cause an avalanche of MSS. to fall upon him, but I am trying to draw his portrait, and unless I mention his generosity to young men, the portrait will not be a faithful one. I am under personal obligations to him of many sorts, and I do not know of any man who so freely helps his friends and says so little about it. He is now sixty-six years old, but there are no signs of age about him other than the fact that his hair and his beard, once red, have turned white. He still has the mind and eagerness of a young man. His walk is as springy and alert as it was when I first knew him, as I am sure it has always been. When I see him in the street sometimes, tall, lean, very tidy and almost foppish in an unusual way, walking with great assurance and ease, examining now and then his very shapely hands, and gazing about him with that queer, quizzical, kindly look in his pleasant eyes that is so significant of him, I feel that although he is thirty years older than

I am, according to the official records, he is, in spirit, thirty years younger. He will never be old. If he lives to be a centenarian, he will still be talking like a young man; and perhaps it is his extraordinary youth and vitality, as much as his disrespect for established things, that draws young men inevitably to him. His fearless, challenging spirit attracted all those who were in revolt against stagnant beliefs; and even now, when the multitude seems to have caught up with him and his views are less startling than they were a few years ago, he still stimulates the minds of the young and the eager and sends them bounding forward. "You should so live," he once said, "that when you die, God is in your debt!" He bids men and women strive to put more into the common pool than they take out, and he asserts with something like moral fury that any one who is taking more from the common pool than he puts in, is cheating both God and man. There are querulous persons who say that his work will not live. Their forefathers probably said that Shakespeare's work would not live, that Cervantes's work would not live, that Fielding's work would not live, that Dickens's work would not live; and no doubt they produced

sound arguments to support their faith. Who could have believed that "Don Quixote," a mere skit on comtemporary novelettes, would win universal favour, or that "Pickwick Papers," mere verbiage for a set of pictures drawn by a popular artist, would live? Yet these local, topical, and very contemporary things will not perish. Mr. Shaw has indisputably affected the thoughts and lives of thinking men and women on two continents for thirty years. He is a very daring fellow who asks us to believe that this brilliant, original, forceful mind will not continue to affect the thoughts and lives of thinking men and women for generations to come.

# H. G. WELLS

## I

THERE are men, such as Dr. Johnson, who are mentally active and physically torpid, and there are other men, such as Mr. Jack Johnson, who are very alert physically, but not quite so alert in their minds. It seldom happens that a man combines great physical energy with great intellectual energy. Such a man is Mr. Bernard Shaw. So is Mr. H. G. Wells. I imagine that Mr. Wells is more active, both in body and in mind, than Mr. Shaw, despite the fact that the latter is the slender man of the two and that his tongue works more rapidly in conjunction with his brain; for Mr. Shaw feels fatigue sooner than Mr. Wells. I doubt whether Mr. Wells suffers from fatigue at all or to any serious extent. He takes few, if any, holidays, works for many hours every day, plays games very assiduously, and is unhappy if he has not got some work on hand. He begins to write a new book immediately he has completed its

precedessor, having no belief, seemingly, in fallow time. When he is not working or playing, he is talking. His conversation has a curious resemblance in its shape, if I may use that word, to the style of his writing. One listens for the suspended sentence, for the dots with which, in his prose, he breaks a thought so that the reader may himself complete it. Mr. Shaw once told me that he could not work at creative writing for more than two hours every day, and I suspect that he suffers more from physical fatigue than he will admit. Mr. Wells works for considerably more than two hours every day (and sometimes during the night) though I do not suppose he works for two consecutive hours at any time. If you are a guest in his house, you will see him engaged in some game, tennis or hockey or that wild game of his own invention, "barn-ball," or perhaps playing demon patience; and when you are inclined to imagine that he is settling down to a long day of games, you discover that he is no longer with the players, but back in his study working on a manuscript.

One expects a certain amount of sluggishness in every man, and probably there are days when Mr. Wells's mind and body go to sleep or lie about

supine, but I do not believe that any one has ever seen him asleep or supine. His mind is so active that one can almost see ideas leaping off his tongue as he talks, and he has a very remarkable capacity for engaging the attention of his auditors without making any perceptible effort to do so. His conversation, unlike that of Mr. Yeats or Mr. George Moore, is unrehearsed conversation. It has not the swift brilliance of Mr. Shaw's talk, and it goes to its point rather jerkily, but it reaches its destination. He is not so easily distracted from his course as Mr. Gilbert Chesterton is, or perhaps I ought to say that he does not take so long to get to his destination. Mr. Chesterton seems to me to be falling with great amiability on his subject, whereas Mr. Wells is eagerly struggling up to it. Mr. Chesterton defers to others with great courtesy, but his mind, I imagine, is already made up. He listens to a controversialist, not because he thinks he is likely to be converted to an opposite opinion—he is fairly certain that he will not be converted—but because he has excellent manners and an exceptionally kindly character. It is hard to believe that any man of merit is without some malice in his nature, some element of

cattishness, but if there is a man of merit without these things then that man is Mr. Chesterton. If he could bring himself to throttle the creature he most detests, the international financier, the man without a country, he would, I am sure, do so entirely without prejudice. Mr. Wells listens, not out of politeness, but in the hope that he will receive information, and this hope of his causes him to listen very patiently even to bad or inexpert talkers. He has the additional merit, rare among men of genius, of being an uncommonly good host, very punctilious about the comfort and pleasure of his guests. He is a sociable man, mingling easily with very various people, gregarious where Mr. Yeats and Mr. Shaw are solitary, and he is instinctively friendly. His hospitality is lavish and with something of the Dickensian tradition in it. He has none of the chilly aloofness of Mr. Yeats nor of the shy constraint of Mr. Shaw nor of the nervous coldness of Mr. Galsworthy. Were it not for a degree of cruelty in his nature, I should say that Mr. Chesterton and he were as near to each other in temperament as any two men of merit can be. It is this strain of cruelty in him which makes him so attractive when he loses his

temper, for he seems only to be witty when he is about to hit some one very severely on the head. I do not know any man who can lose his temper in print with so much effect and so entertainingly as Mr. Wells can lose his. He is hardly a witty man, as Mr. Shaw and Mr. Yeats and even Mr. Gilbert Chesterton are witty men, but he has a neat, malicious humour which delights him as much as it delights his friends, and is most often displayed when he is attacking some one.

## II

If a writer wished to create a character who would most aptly personify the past thirty years of English or of world history, he would have to create a character very like Mr. Wells: a questioning, variable, demanding person, with some impatience and testiness of temper, with, at times, a fantastic and wayward manner, but always superimposed on these superficialities, an eager and unthwartable desire for a true belief. Mr. Chesterton said of him once that "you lie awake at night and hear him grow," and fundamentally that is true, in spite of the temptation one has at times to

believe that one lies awake at night and merely hears him changing his mind. One could, were one silly enough to do so, construct a plausible indictment of Mr. Wells of hurriedly accepting a belief and as hurriedly rejecting it; but to do so would be to charge oneself with a superficial mind. Mr. Wells, in his eagerness to discover a reasonable and sane society in which the spirit of man may grow and develop and achieve, has sometimes accepted a theory too swiftly, but his scientific mind has come, sooner or later, to the rescue of his eager heart and has caused him to reject proposals which he had previously found acceptable.

In "First and Last Things" he decides against the community of austere aristocrats who won his advocacy in "A Modern Utopia." The self-disregard of the Samurai of Japan had pleased him as it must please all who contemplate it, and he imagined a state in which the best men would govern "the average, sensual men," formulating their laws and doctrines from the sanctuary of a sort of monastic establishment in which their fleshly desires would be chastened and perhaps eliminated. Mr. Wells, having felt the allure of a select company of selfless aristocrats, devoting them-

selves to the good government of less gifted men, soon discovered that good government cannot be administered by men who are remote from the emotions and desires of the governed and so, with characteristic courage, he abandoned his Samurai and boldly marched into the company of the crowd. Can any one find ground for sneering in such behaviour as that? Are not those who try to find solutions to puzzles more likely to be successful in their efforts because Mr. Wells has offered one solution and then, finding it useless, repudiated it and tried another?

There was a time when he saw hope for the world in the establishment of a universal language, but I doubt whether he holds to that hope now. A common speech does not keep men at peace any more than a common purpose does, and, in any event, man's incorrigible habit of localizing universal things until they cease to be universal tends in time to make a common speech an impossible possession. The Catholic Church has a common speech in the Latin tongue, but an Italian priest can preach to an English priest in that language and remain incomprehensible. The British and the American people have a common speech, but

it has become so permeated with local words that very often the two races are unintelligible to each other, apart altogether from the difficulty of accent.

Mr. Wells has plunged into a few bog-holes of that sort, but he has always extricated himself from them, and less and less, as he develops, does he insist upon uniformity and machinery, and more and more does he insist on diversity and spirit. "Let us be Catholics in this great matter," Mr. Birrell writes on Browning's poetry, "and burn our candles at many shrines. In the pleasant realms of poesy, no liveries are worn, no paths prescribed; you may wander where you will, stop where you like, and worship whom you love. Nothing is demanded of you, save this, that in all your wanderings and worships, you keep two objects steadily in view—two, and two only—truth and beauty." It may fairly be said of Mr. Wells that in all his "wanderings and worships" he has tried to do so.

## III

There is a photograph of Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mr. H. G. Wells, taken by an American

photographer, Mr. Alvin Langdon Coburn, in which the two men are shown sitting side by side. It is the most illuminating interpretation of their characters that I have ever seen. Mr. Shaw, with something of the look of a prophet, sits beside Mr. Wells who has a smile of disbelief on his face; Mr. Shaw shows a countenance full of faith, while Mr. Wells shows one full of inquiry. Mr. Shaw accepts the pose quite naturally, but Mr. Wells is deprecating. I felt when I saw that photograph in Mr. Wells's study that while Mr. Shaw accepted the status of a great man as his right, Mr. Wells felt uncomfortable about the pose, not because he doubts his right to be regarded as a great man, but because he is reluctant to live on pedestals. "I'm human just as much as you are," he seems to be saying to the photographer, and the smile of deprecation on his face means, if it means anything, that while Mr. Shaw accepts the great man's altitude without a qualm, Mr. Wells feels that the whole thing is humbug. "Shaw is taken in by this Great Man business," the Wells of the photograph says as plainly as if the picture were to take life and utter words, "but don't you imagine I'm deluded by it! . . ."

These two men, one Irish, one English, George Bernard Shaw and Herbert George Wells, between them have done more to influence the minds of the young men of my generation than any other two men of their time. Their attitude towards life may, perhaps, be summarized in an account of the way in which they interpret the doctrine of Evolution. Mr. Shaw believes that the Life Force, which ordinary men call God, is an Imperfect Thing seeking to make Itself Perfect. How, when you contemplate the miseries and inequalities and cruelties of existence, can you believe in an All-Powerful God? he says. You must believe that these horrible things happen because God cannot prevent them from happening. The blind-alley argument that the Almighty inflicts pain upon us for our good is insupportable when one considers that an earthly father would not subject his child to convulsions or cause a cancer to consume its life or endow it with a cruel disposition if such things were within his powers of disposal. If, one reasonably argues, an earthly father is incapable of such acts, how less likely is God to be capable of them if He be All-Powerful and All-Good? Since these inexplicable cruelties and hor-

rors occur and recur, surely, argues Mr. Shaw, it is only common sense to assume that they do so in spite of God's good will towards man. Starting from this premise, he goes on to argue that God seeks to obtain that control over material things which He has not yet succeeded in obtaining. He imagines God engaged in a magnificent research, the discovery of a harmonious universe, much in the way in which one imagines a biologist in his laboratory seeking for a preventative of disease. The Life Force uses such instruments for its purpose as are to be found lying at hand. When these prove abortive or useless or insufficient, the Life Force invents a new instrument which it uses until that instrument, too, is found to be useless or inadequate and is scrapped in favour of a new instrument. Like all creators, God must express Himself through His creatures, and the whole of Time has been spent so far in finding a suitable means of expression. In the beginning, God used mammoth beasts, but finding them unsuitable for His purpose, He scrapped them and invented other creatures until at last He achieved His best instrument, Man. God's latest and finest creature differs from all His other creatures in this respect that he

is conscious of God's purpose and can help it forward or hold it back. God concealed His intention from all the instruments that preceded the advent of Man, but, in the development of His Being, He found that greater advantage would accrue to Him if He made His instrument aware of its purpose. So we get the reason of Man. God, before the creation of Man, had depended upon Himself. After the creation of Man, he depended partly upon Himself, partly upon His creature. *Man, in short, was the first of God's instruments to have the power to help God to realize Himself.* To Mr. Shaw, it is an obscuring of God's purpose for Man continually to pray, "God help me!" when it is part of his purpose and duty to affirm, "I will help God!" I have already quoted his dictum that we should so live that when we die, God is in our debt.

It is obvious, from this belief, that Mr. Shaw does not believe in the inevitable march of mankind from bad to good and from good to better. We may be marching towards Utopia or the New Jerusalem, or we may be marching back to Chaos. Man, having the choice between helping God and thwarting Him, may so vex the Deity that He will

become impatient with him and throw this instrument away as he has thrown away other useless instruments, and seek for a better one. God scrapped the mammoth beasts because they were not adequate for the execution of His design; He *may* scrap Man for the same reason or because Man, while adequate, wilfully refuses to help. This theory is expressed continually in Mr. Shaw's plays and prefaces, for example, in a speech by Cæsar in "Cæsar and Cleopatra," where the Emperor gives expression to a violent antipathy to war. War, in Mr. Shaw's mind, is a plain perversion of God's purpose, and he would probably declare that Man, in the Great War whose end may yet be a bloody battle between the Allies, almost reached the end of God's patience. In five years, the British alone had eight hundred thousand of her most valuable men *killed.* France lost double that number *killed.* Germany lost more even than France *killed.* All the potentialities for good, all the fervour and chivalry and idealism and courage that was in those men, their ability to help God to achieve perfection, has vanished utterly from the world; and there is nothing left of it. Most of them died without

progeny, and so there is not even the hope that their spirit has passed on to their children and that, at the worst, God's purpose has only been suspended for a generation. They have gone, irretrievably gone. Another such war and Western civilization must perish, if, indeed, it has not already begun to decay. In other words, God, sickened by Man's perversity and wilful obstruction, will have scrapped him. . . .

That is the Shavian doctrine of the Life Force, put plainly and simply.

Mr. Wells differs very sharply from Mr. Shaw in his doctrine. Mr. Shaw believes that the progress from bad to good is not inevitable: Mr. Wells believes that it is, and he produces the records of history to support his belief. Mankind, at this moment, he will admit, is in a very bloody mess, but that mess is not so frightful as, say, the mess after the Thirty Years' War. We, who contemplate the organized Murder of Youth which began in August, 1914, may fairly feel that mankind has sunk very low in barbarism, but when we survey the whole range of humanity so far as it has been recorded, the depths of 1914, deep though they are, appear to be slightly less dreadful than

the depths of other days. There is a greater revolt from organized Murder to-day than there was after the Thirty Years' War. There are fewer people to-day who prate about the glories of war than there were then. (Oddly enough, or perhaps naturally enough, most of the people who still think of war as a jolly adventure live in America.) We are a little nearer to a realization of the commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Kill" than we were before 1914. We are learning that there are no qualifications or exceptions to that commandment. It does not say, "Thou shalt not kill—except in defence of small nationalities!" It does not say, "Thou shalt not kill—except for the purpose of self-determination!" It does not say, "Thou shalt not kill—except for the establishment of a Republic in Ireland!" It does not say, "Thou shalt not kill—except for the purpose of preserving the Empire!" Tersely and without modification, it states that "Thou Shalt Not Kill" in any circumstances whatever.

Here is a dilemma from which the Christian cannot easily escape, and the difficulty of doing so, apart from all ordinary considerations of decency, is bringing man sharply face to face with the fun-

damentals of human existence. In spite of much occasion for pessimism to-day, there is occasion for greater optimism than man ever before has had. There is a social consciousness at work in our minds and hearts that will yet deliver us from the wicked man. How few are the years since the days when men in one part of England made war on men in another part! How unthinkable it is that men in Lancaster should make war to-day in Yorkshire! True, it is less than a century since men in the Northern States of America made war on men in the Southern States. True, it is less than ten years since men in Ulster prepared themselves to make war on men in the rest of Ireland. True, at this moment, Russian fights Russian, and Sinn Feiner slays Orangeman, and Orangeman slays Sinn Feiner. True, that white man burns black man, that Christian persecutes Jew, true all this and worse, yet it remains true that when the records of time are made up and just balances are drawn in the accounts of Mankind, there is seen to be a greater perception of common purpose to-day than there was a century ago.

His scientific and historic sense keeps Mr. Wells secure in his belief that Man, although he may

hinder the development of God's purpose, cannot thwart it. Mr. Shaw would perhaps agree with Mr. Wells in his belief that God's Will must ultimately find adequate expression, but he would insist that that expression may be through another instrument than man. Mr. Wells, however, would not yield to him on this point; he would insist that God's Will must ultimately find adequate expression through man. Man may, indeed be obliterated by plague and pestilence or cosmic disaster, but, failing those, man must achieve God's purpose.

## IV

When one brings the Wellsian doctrine down to the details of life, one discovers what I may call a *local* pessimism in it. The anger which breaks out of his work is directed against the incompetence and stupidity of man which hold him back from the desirable country towards which he is marching. The greatest optimists—the men who are convinced that man's end is good and seemly—are almost always the most bitter pessimists when they are considering contemporary affairs. The

visionary loves mankind in the abstract so much that when he contemplates mankind in the concrete he loses his temper. The Utopian, full of his dream of a decent and free civilization in which every man may move easily to his proper station, feels a dreadful depression when he looks upon society as it exists here and now; and there are times when, in spite of his sure and certain hope that life will ultimately find its level, he feels that man, that perverse, wayward, thwarting creature, will never fulfil the promise of his potentialities because he is too closely concerned with some tiny, personal vanity, because he allows wickedness and stupidity to influence him to a greater degree than goodness and fine thought. Who, thinking over the Big Four in Paris, and remembering that millions of young men of all nations died so that the Big Four might meet and make a more enduring peace than this world has yet known, can feel anything but anger and humiliation at what they did? Clemenceau, the "Tiger" who, having tasted blood, seemed eager to taste more; Lloyd George, who never remembers a friend or forgets an enemy; Orlando, shamelessly extending his itching palm; and Wilson, the man who went to Europe to ask

for the moon and returned to America, having accepted a match . . . can any of us, contemplating those four men, given by God the greatest opportunity that has ever been offered to men, that may ever be offered to men, help feeling that this world is dead and damned and that the sooner a disgusted God smashes it to pieces, the better will be the universe? Mr. Wells cannot escape, any more than the rest of us, this tendency to despair of human effort, and here and there in his books his *local* pessimism is expressed; but his universal optimism remains unimpaired, and one comes away from his writings in the knowledge that he believes that man sooner or later will achieve a high destiny. He whips the stupid and the selfish and the idle, but he will not permit them to persuade him from his belief that even out of these elements, a finer Man will yet be made.

## V

There is a cartoon by Mr. Max Beerbohm in which he shows himself being conducted through a gallery where Mr. Wells, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Galsworthy, Mr. Bennett and many other eminent

writers are standing on inverted tubs, haranguing the universe. Having listened to the preachers and propagandists, Mr. Beerbohm turns to his guide and says, "But where are the artists?" only to be informed that "*These* are the artists!" It has been said that Mr. Shaw would rather be known as a great political economist than as a great dramatist, that Mr. Arnold Bennett would rather be known as an eminent business man than as an eminent novelist, that Mr. Galsworthy would prefer to be a reformer than a man of letters, and that Mr. Wells seeks fame as a sociologist and not as an artist. There is enough truth in this statement to give pause to those about whom it is made, but not sufficient to frighten us who admire them. Mr. Wells, for example, can no more elude artistry than he can refrain from thinking. He is extraordinarily indifferent to literary style, seems almost to delight in making a clumsy sentence rather than a shapely one, and, so far as one can discover, does not spend a single second on "finding the right word." The idea is his chief concern, and he cares very little for the way in which it is expressed. Nevertheless, he remains an artist, with a gift for apt expressions and a far greater gift for

selection. In one of his books, he describes the prostitute as "that painted disaster of the street." In "First and Last Things," in describing the inability of the intellect to free itself from bias, he says, "the forceps of the mind is a clumsy instrument and crushes the truth a little in seizing it." At the end of "Tono-Bungay" there is an account of a trip down the Thames which is among the great pieces of prose writing. In "The Undying Fire," he gives an account of the purposeless cruelty of Nature and an account of the state of mind of a young German who goes from his remote village to join the Army at the beginning of the war, full of patriotic ardour, offering for this service and for that until at last he becomes a member of the crew of a submarine and his patriotism suffers a sea-change and becomes the desperate courage of a rat in a trap . . . and these two accounts are so vivid that it is impossible for any one to rise from them unaware that they have been written by a man of genius, possessed of artistry.

He is probably the most prolific writer of his quality in the world, and if I had exact knowledge of the world's greatest authors, I should probably

say that he is the most varied of them. Consider how very dissimilar his books are in range and interest. Consider that the man who wrote "The Time Machine," wrote also "The History of Mr. Polly" and the "The Undying Fire." How many writers have shown such variety as has been shown by the author of "The War in the Air," "Kipps" (that beautiful and tender book), "Tono-Bungay" and "The Soul of a Bishop." At one moment, Mr. Wells is writing "Bealby" and at the next, he is writing "God, the Invisible King." He turns from "The Wonderful Visit" to "The Outline History of the World," and writes "The Future in America" in the trail of "Love and Mr. Lewisham." ("The Future in America" is perhaps the best book of its kind that has ever been written on the problems that lie before the American people.) Queen Victoria, having been enchanted by "Alice in Wonderland," sent to a book-seller for the remainder of "Lewis Carroll's" writings, and was considerably disconcerted when she received "Plane Trigonometry" and "Curiosa Mathematica" by the Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. What that excellent old lady would have thought,

if having read and liked "The Sea Lady," she had been supplied with "Mankind in the Making" and "The Island of Dr. Moreau" and "Joan and Peter" by the same author, I cannot imagine. Mr. Wells faces life very fairly and squarely, regarding it from all angles of vision. There is only one Truth, but it may be approached by many different paths; and Mr. Wells has attempted most of them. It may seem to some of his readers at times that he is running away from things towards which he formerly ran, but it is more likely that he is merely trying another way of getting to the same point.

## VI

One remembers men by odd things. I remember Mr. Yeats chiefly as a dark image, obscurely seen, and Mr. Shaw as a shy, erect man with fine, shapely hands, who talks emphatically because otherwise he would not be talking at all. I remember Mr. Galsworthy as one who is biting his lips or clenching his teeth lest he should say too much, and Mr. George Moore as one who is consumed with the fear that he will not say enough. Mr. Wells comes into my mind as an eager, friendly

man, whose speech, thinly uttered, suggests continual testing. But mostly I remember his fine eyes because it is in them that most of his strength is stored.

## WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

### I

I HAVE been acquainted with Mr. Yeats for a longer time than I have with any other man named in this book, but I seem to myself to know very little about him, for he is extraordinarily aloof from life. His aloofness is different from that of Mr. Galsworthy who is perturbed about mankind. Mr. Yeats is totally unconcerned about problems of any sort. He is more interested in the things men do than in men themselves. He prefers the symbol to the thing symbolized. The harshest condemnation I ever heard him utter was delivered on "A. E." of whom he said that he had ceased to be a poet in order to become a philanthropist! I met him last in Chicago, and I felt when we parted that I knew no more of him then than I knew when I first met him ten years earlier. Our meeting followed on the fact that I had sent a one-act play, entitled "The Magnanimous Lover," to him. It seems to me now to be a crudely-contrived, ill-writ-

ten and violent piece, but when I sent it to Mr. Yeats I thought it was a remarkable work. It was performed after the production of Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes" and Mr. Galsworthy's "The Eldest Son," which have similar themes, but was written several years before they were performed. One evening, a few weeks after I had sent the manuscript of "The Magnanimous Lover" to him, I received a letter from Mr. Yeats, written in that queer, illegible, thick style which is so difficult to read. Many of the words were incomplete: all of them were badly-formed. The contrast between the handwriting of Mr. Shaw and Mr. Yeats is remarkable. Mr. Shaw's is very clear and neat and most beautifully-shaped, as delicate as a spider's web, but Mr. Yeats's writing is obscure, untidy, sprawling and hard to decipher, looking as if it had been done with a blunt pen. Mr. Wells writes in a small, clean, but not very clear hand, a deceptive fist, for it seems easier to read than it is. There is some oddness in the fact that the handwriting of the poet should be so coarse and ungainly, while the handwriting of the dramatist, with so little of poetic emotion in him, is fine and shapely. The letter from Mr. Yeats was to say

that he liked my play, but could not make a definite decision about it until he had consulted his co-director at the Abbey Theatre, Lady Gregory. It had the formal, distant tone which is characteristic of his speech and writing, but it had a postscript which gave me great pleasure. In this postscript, he said that my play was the only example of "wayward realism" that he had ever read. I did not quite understand what he meant by the phrase, but it was a compliment from a distinguished man and compliments from distinguished men had never come my way before. I have had many praising letters from him since then about my work, but none that ever raised me to such a state of dizzy delight as that first letter did. He told me, in another postscript, that he found in my "dialogue a quality of temperament, as distinguished from the usual impersonal logic. You have more than construction, and it is growing rare to have more." He thought highly of "John Ferguson"—so did Mr. Shaw and "A. E."—and when I was attacked in Dublin because of this play, I comforted myself with the thought that my betters liked what was denounced by my inferiors. Mr. Yeats wrote to

me that "John Ferguson" was "a fragment of life, fully expounded and without conventionality or confusion. I think it is the best play you have done, though not likely to be the most popular." His criticism is especially valuable when it is adverse. I had written a play called "Mrs. Martin's Man" which I now know to have been a dreadful mess of motives. I sent it to Mr. Yeats in the hope that he would permit it to be done at the Abbey. He wrote lengthily to me about it, and when I had read his letter I put my play in the fire, though afterwards I used the theme, purged of the faults he had found in it, for a novel with the same title. "I believe," he wrote,

"I believe that the play is an error. I am very sorry indeed to say this, for I know what a blow it is to any dramatist to be told that about work which must have taken many weeks. Shaw has driven you off your balance, and instead of giving a vision of life, which is your gift and a most remarkable gift to have, you have begun to be topical, to play with ideas, to construct outside of life. Shaw has a very unique mind, a mind that is a part of a logical process going on all over Europe but which has found in him alone its efficient expression in English. He has no vision of life. He is a figure of international argument. There is an old saying, "No

angel can carry two messages. You have the greater gift of seeing life itself. . . . "

I print that extract from his letter, partly as a corrective to my own pride, but chiefly because of its commentary on Mr. Shaw. Later, in this chapter I will make specific reference to Mr. Yeats's relationship to Mr. Shaw's work, but here I may say that, in spite of his sincere regard and admiration for Mr. Shaw, Mr. Yeats seems to be totally incapable of comprehending his work. He is able to communicate with ghosts, but he cannot communicate with Mr. Shaw. He can understand astrologers and necromancers and spiritualists and thimble-riggers of all sorts and conditions, but he cannot understand Mr. Shaw. He told me on one occasion of an experience he had with a medium, a young girl who differed from all other mediums known to him in being a member of the upper class. The spirits, seemingly, prefer to communicate their messages through the lower orders. This girl's family were ashamed of her cataleptic powers and tried to conceal them from their neighbours, but they were persuaded to permit Mr. Yeats to see her in a trance. "While she was in the trance," he said to me, "her fingers closed on her palm. Then

they opened again, and I saw a small green pebble in the centre of her palm!" That was all! Immortal souls had disturbed the harmony of the universe and thrown a young girl of the upper class into a trance in order that they might place a small green pebble in the centre of her palm! And Mr. Yeats saw something wonderful and significant in that performance, but is unable to see anything significant in the work of Mr. Shaw. That to me is a thing so incomprehensible that I have abandoned all attempts to understand it. But all of this is digression and anticipation. Soon after I had received the letter in which he praised my "wayward realism," I heard from Mr. Yeats again. He invited me to call on him on the following Sunday evening at his rooms in Woburn Buildings, behind the Euston Road, in London; and thither, in a state of some excitement, I repaired. I had no trouble in finding the house, for Mr. Yeats, who, in some ways, is much more precise and clear-minded than people imagine or his handwriting indicates, had given me very explicit directions how to get to it, and had even drawn a rough sketch of the neighbourhood so that I should not fail to find him. Woburn Buildings consists

of a number of tall houses in a narrow passage off Southampton Row, and running parallel with the Euston Road. It is a dingy, dark place, with an air of furtive poverty about it, and on Sunday nights it is depressing enough to fill a man's mind with plots for drab dramas. I have heard that H. G. Wells thought of the plot of that clever, devilish story of his, "The Island of Dr. Moreau," in the Tottenham Court Road on a Bank Holiday when he was in a mood of discontent. I believe that the whole of the "drab drama" was first conceived on Mr. Yeats's doorstep!

Shops form the ground floor of these houses, little, huckstering shops that just contrive to support their proprietors, and Mr. Yeats's rooms were on the third and fourth floors of a house which had a cobbler's shop on the ground floor. The cobbler was a pleasant, bearded man, wearing spectacles who had some share in the management of his affairs; for when one, unable to obtain admission to the poet's rooms, required information about him, the cobbler invariably supplied it. He could tell whether Mr. Yeats had gone to Ireland or was merely taking the air, and when he was likely to return, and he would offer, with great

courtesy, to take a message from you to be faithfully delivered to him on his arrival.

Mr. Yeats has poor and failing sight, and in the dusk of the Sunday evening on which I called on him, he could barely discern me. He stood in the hall, holding the door, looking very tall and dark, and said in that peculiar, tired and plaintive voice of his, "Who is it?" and I answered "St. John Ervine." There is always something conspiratorial about the manner in which he admits you to his rooms. You felt that you want to give the countersign.

"Oh, yes!" he said, without any interest, and bade me enter.

In one of his books, he writes that life seems to him to be a preparation for something that never happens; and the quality of his voice suggests that thwarted desire which is expressed in so much of his work. He is, in poetry, what Mr. Galsworthy is, in fiction: he surrenders to life. I do not know of any one who can speak verse so beautifully and yet so depressingly as he can. The very great beauty that is in all his work does not stir you: it saddens you. There is no sunrise in his writing: there is only sunset. In his lyrics, there

is the cadence of fatigue and of the lethargy that comes partly from disappointment, partly from loneliness, partly from doubt, and partly from inertia. "Innisfree," the beauty of which has not been diminished by familiarity, does not sound glad: it sounds tired. The poet's wish to return to the lake island is not due to any pleasurable emotion, but to weariness and exhaustion: he dreams of the island, not as a place in which to work and to achieve, but in which to retire from work and achievement that has not brought with it the gratification for which he hoped; and the final impression left on the mind of the reader is that the poet is too tired and disappointed to do more than wish that he might go to Innisfree. One reads the beautiful poem in the sure and certain belief that Mr. Yeats will not "arise and go now, and go to Innisfree," but that he will remain where he is. There is no impulse or movement in the poem: there is only a passive wish and a plaintive resignation.

And all that inertia and negation and inactive desire is sounded in his voice. It is very palpable in his manner.

He warned me not to make a noise as I ascended

the uncarpeted stairs: the people on the second floor might be disturbed. They were working-people, I understood, and either there was a fretful baby asleep or the people retired early because they had to rise early, and he did not wish to break their rest. Yeats can be very harsh and inconsiderate with his associates, but his bearing to poor men and women, in my experience, is very courteous and very considerate. He could not have been more gracious to a duchess—he probably was sometimes less gracious to a duchess—than he was to the middle-aged woman who cooked his meals and kept his rooms clean. I have seen distinguished men being gracious to poor, unlettered men, but most of them had an air of . . . not exactly condescension in doing so, but of altering their attitude slightly, of relaxing and unbending, of modifying their style, as it were, and making it simpler. I did not observe any effort at condescension in his manner towards that plain and simple woman. He spoke to her in the same way that he would speak to "A. E." or to Lady Gregory. I suppose that Queen Victoria was the only woman in the world to whom Yeats ever spoke in a condescending fashion.

## II

He is a tall man, with dark hanging hair that is now turning grey, and he has a queer way of focussing when he looks at you. I do not know what is the defect of sight from which he suffers, but it makes his way of regarding you somewhat disturbing. He has a poetic appearance, entirely physical, and owing nothing to any eccentricity of dress; for, apart from his neck-tie, there is nothing odd about his clothes. It is not easy to talk to him in a familiar fashion, and I imagine that he has difficulty in talking easily on common topics. I soon discovered that he is not comfortable with individuals: he needs an audience to which he can discourse in a pontifical manner. If he is compelled to remain in the company of one person for any length of time, he begins to pretend that the individual is a crowd listening to him. His talk is seldom about common-place things: it is either in a high and brilliant style or else it is full of reminiscences of dead friends. I do not believe that any one in this world has ever spoken familiarly to him or that any one has ever slapped him on the back and said "Helloa, old chap!" His relatives

and near friends call him "Willie" but it has always seemed to me that they do so with an effort, that they feel that they ought to call him "Mr. Yeats!" I doubt very much whether he takes any intimate interest in any human being. It may be, of course, that he took less interest in me than he took in any one else for I am not a very interesting person; but I always felt that when I left his presence, it was immaterial to him whether he ever saw me again or not. I felt that, on my hundredth meeting with him, I should be no nearer intimacy with him than I was on my first meeting. My vanity has since been soothed by the knowledge that he has given a similar impression regarding themselves to other people who know him better than I do. I have seen him come suddenly into the presence of a man whom he had known for many years, and greet him awkwardly as if he did not know what to say. He never offers his hand to a friend: he will often stand looking at one without speaking, and then bow and pass on, with perhaps a fumbled "Good evening!" but never with a "How are you?" or "I'm glad to see you!"

It is, I suppose, the result of some natural clumsiness of manner. He has trained himself to an

elegance of demeanour, an elaborate courteousness, which is very pleasing to a stranger, but he has spent so much time in achieving this elegance that he has forgotten or never learned how to greet a friend.

He was expecting other people to come to his rooms that Sunday evening. . . . I remember he mentioned that Madame Maud Gonne McBride was expected to arrive in London from Paris on her way to Ireland, and might call on her way to Euston Station . . . but no one else came. He talked to me about my play and told me that he liked it very much, but that Lady Gregory did not greatly care for it. "She is a realist herself," he said, "and all realists hate each other. Synge would have disliked your play, and Robinson does not like it, but I do!" (Lennox Robinson, himself a dramatist, was then manager of the Abbey Theatre.) He asked me if I had written any other plays, and I told him that I was half-way through a four-act play, called "Mixed Marriage," and I described the theme of it to him. He urged me to complete this play and bring the MS. to his rooms and read it to him. "The difficulty about 'The Magnanimous Lover,'" he said, "is that it

may provoke some disturbance among the audience, and as our patent expires shortly we do not wish to give the authorities any ground for refusing to renew it. They were very angry over our production of Bernard Shaw's 'Blanco Posnet' after the Censor refused to license it in England. We'll leave the production of 'The Magnanimous Lover' until the patent has been renewed. If your new play were ready, we could do it first and create a public for you! . . . "

Mr. Yeats is one of the best advertising agents in the world, and I did not doubt his ability to "create a public" for me, although I thought that Lady Gregory would probably be more skilful even that he could be. When one remembers that she has established a considerable reputation as a dramatist on two continents entirely on the strength of half-a-dozen one-act plays, it is impossible to doubt that she is at least as skilful as he in drawing attention to herself. A great amount of their advertising energy has, of course, been expended on the Abbey Theatre and the Irish Literary Renaissance, and a great many Irish writers, myself included, have derived advantage, personal and pecuniary, from their activities. It would have

been better for us, perhaps, if Mr. Yeats had employed his critical ability more freely than his eulogy on our work. There is an immense amount of creative power in Ireland, but it is raw, untutored, tumid stuff, and because the critical faculty in Ireland is almost negligible, this creative power is wasted in violent explosive plays and books or violent, explosive beliefs.

I have always believed in the interdependence of all men and minds. It seems to me that an ill-conceived, foolish political scheme must in some manner react on every other department of man's life, and that the labourer who is doing his job badly in a remote village is in some measure adversely affecting the welfare of his countrymen miles away. Violent, crude plays are inevitable in a land of violent, crude beliefs; and it is, I think, not without significance that some of the most violent, crude plays in the Abbey repertory were written by dramatists who professed the violent, crude beliefs of Sinn Fein. When one thinks of the generosity and courage and nobility of many of the Sinn Feiners, it is hard not to lose faith in human perfectibility when one considers how foolish are the political schemes they devise. If men

so good and exalted as these men are can produce schemes so stupid and sometimes so cruel, how can we hope for any progress in the world when we remember how many bad men there are? And have we not seen how men of lofty ideals can tumble into cruelty and become brutal ruffians in the name of patriotism?

## III

But there is an explanation of all this crudity and violence in Ireland. For all sorts of reasons, political, social, historical and religious, the critical faculty has rarely been employed and certainly has not been developed. Either you are for a thing or you are against it. Doubt is treated as if it were antagonism. Reluctance to commit oneself to any scheme however fantastic or ill-considered it may be, is treated as treason to the national spirit. A man who asserts his belief in the establishment of an Irish Republic, by force, if necessary, is an Irishman, even though he be a "dago," and any one who is doubtful of the feasibility of this proposal is denounced as a West Briton, an anglicised Irishman, even, on occasions,

as "not Irish at all," although his forbears have lived in Ireland for generations. The state of affairs in Ireland is not unlike the state of affairs in Russia, where literary criticism, as a Russian writer has stated, has always tended to be the handmaid of political faction. "Any writer of sufficient talent" says a reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement*, "who adopted a liberal attitude was certain of the appreciation of the *intelligentsia's* acknowledged critical leaders, and hence of a wide and enthusiastic audience. But writers whose instinct for the truth led them to doubt the sufficiency of doctrinaire discontent with the established order were debarred from the aids to literary advancement, and had to struggle against the grain of popular, and even academic, valuation."

It is even worse than that in Ireland, for there, generally speaking, there is hardly any criticism at all, although there is plenty of abuse. In great measure this lack of criticism is due to the fact that all the mind of Ireland has been obsessed by the demand for, or the opposition to, self-government. There has not been any reality in Irish electoral contests for a great many years. Until

the growth of Sinn Fein, there seldom were any contests at all. Candidates for parliament were nearly always returned unopposed. Contests, if there were any, were between one Nationalist and another, concerned with matters of detail and not with matters of principle, or, at the most, between a Nationalist and a Unionist, concerned with the advocacy of, or opposition to, Home Rule. Sinn Fein has, indeed, brought a contest to every constituency, but even here the contest is concerned with the old obsession, self-government in one form or self-government in another: Home Rule within the British Commonwealth or a Republic outside it. If one considers that this obsession was nearly always expressed in bitter language, it is not difficult to understand how deplorable its effects have been on the general life of the Irish people. It has temporarily incapacitated them from judging any proposition in a sane and dispassionate fashion; and so the critical faculty in Ireland has languished until at times one fears that it has decayed.

Mr. Yeats is a great creative artist: he is also a great critic. Had he chosen to do so, he could have had an enormous influence on the minds of

his countrymen. His pride in his craft, his desire for perfect work, his contempt for subterfuges and makeshifts and ill-considered schemes, his knowledge and his skill, all these would have affected the faith and achievements of his countrymen, imperceptibly, perhaps, but very surely. It is unfortunate that he was not appointed to the Chair of Literature in Trinity College, Dublin. I know that he wished to receive this appointment and was disappointed that he did not receive it. The mind that might have disciplined and developed the imagination of young Irishmen was rejected by Trinity College, and it has turned to tiresome preoccupation with disembodied beings, to table-turning and ouija-boards and the childish investigation of what is called spiritual phenomena, but is, in fact, mere conjurer's stuff.

## IV

I saw Mr. Yeats many times after that first visit. He told me that he was always at home to his friends on Monday evening, and he invited me to dine with him on the Monday immediately following the Sunday on which I first met him. No one came on that evening. He talked about acting

and the theatre, and I said something that pleased him, and he complimented me in his grave, courteous manner. "That was well said," he exclaimed, and I flushed with pleasure. The praise of one distinguished man is more than the applause of a multitude of common men. His talk about the theatre, though interesting, was often remote from reality. He was then interested in the more esoteric forms of drama, and was eager to put masks on the actors' faces. He wished to eliminate the personality of the player from the play, and had borrowed some foolish notions from Mr. Gordon Craig about lighting and scenery and dehumanised actors. He had a model of the Abbey Theatre in his rooms and was fond of experimenting with it. There was some inconsistency in his talk about acting: at one moment he was anxious for anonymous, masked players, "freed" from personality, and at the next moment, he was demanding that players should act with their entire bodies, not merely with their voices and faces. Hazlitt, advocates anonymity on the stage, and when one considers how excessive is the regard paid to-day to the actor in comparison with that paid to the play, one is tempted to support Haz-

litt's demand; but I have never understood why one should decline to exploit a personality that is rare.

There is a school of thinkers which holds that the best theatre is that one in which a player may be the hero of the piece to-night and the "voice off" to-morrow night. This is a ridiculous theory. Even if it were practicable, which it is not, it would be a disgraceful waste of material. The manager who consented to a proposal that Madame Sarah Bernhardt should play the part of the servant with one line to say would be an ass and a wastrel. It is, perhaps, unfair to treat a man's "table-talk" as if it were a serious proposal, and I once got into trouble with Mr. Gordon Craig for doing this; but so much of Mr. Yeats's talk and writing is related to this matter of disembodiment and passionless action, that it is difficult not to treat it seriously. For my part, I have always been unable to understand how it is possible for a human being to behave as if he were not a human being.

Most of the talking was done by Mr. Yeats, and he talked extraordinarily well. He is one of the best talkers I have ever listened to, in spite of the fact that his conversation tends to become a

monologue. But if you cannot talk well yourself, you are wise to listen to a man who can. He spoke at length about the men who had been his friends when he was a young man: of Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley and Arthur Symons and Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson; of Henley and Whistler and Mr. Bernard Shaw and of a host of others. He had a puzzled, bewildered admiration for "that strange man of genius, Bernard Shaw," but I never felt that he understood Mr. Shaw or was happy with Mr. Shaw's mind. He could not make head or tail of "John Bull's Other Island" when he read it in MS. Mr. Shaw, in a debate with Mr. Belloc, which I had heard a night or two before the meeting with Mr. Yeats, had said "I am a servant," and this statement pleased Mr. Yeats very much. He was moved by the humility of it. Mr. Shaw, however, hardly entered into Mr. Yeats's early life, and most of the talk that evening was about Beardsley and Wilde and Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson and the members of the Rhymers' Club. "Most of them," he said, "died of drink or went out of their minds!"

It was late when I prepared to leave him. He had been saying that a man should always associate

with his equals and superiors and never with his inferiors, when I recollected that the hour was late and that I might miss the last tram from the Thames Embankment and so have to walk several miles. I was tired, too, and a little depressed, for he seemed to be a lonely man and an uneasy man. He had survived all his friends, but had not succeeded in making any intimacy with their successors. I sometimes feel about him that he is a lost man wandering around looking for his period. When I had announced that I was going home, he astonished me by saying that he would walk part of the way with me. He had not had any exercise all day and felt that he needed some air and movement. (He hates open windows and always keeps his tightly closed.) We walked to the Embankment together, saying little, for silence had fallen on him, and walked along it for a short while. I said some banal thing about Waterloo Bridge, but he did not make any answer; and I did not speak again, but contented myself with observing the difference between his walk when he is moving slowly and his walk when he is moving quickly. He is very dignified in his movements when he walks slowly: he holds his

head erect and carries his hands tightly clenched behind his back; but when he begins to move quickly, the dignity disappears and his walk becomes a tumbling shuffle. That, I suppose, is because of his poor sight.

My tram came along, and I said "Good-night" to him, and he answered "Good-night" in a vague fashion. I think he had completely forgotten me.

## V

He had told me that he was going on the following day to Manchester to lecture to some society there, and I was sufficiently interested in his opinions to get a copy of the "Manchester Guardian" containing a report of what he had said. I was amused to find that his lecture was a repetition of all that he had said to me on the Monday before the day on which he lectured. He had "tried it on the dog," and I was the dog. All his speeches are carefully rehearsed before they are publicly delivered. He told me once that Oscar Wilde rehearsed his conversation in the morning and then, being word-perfect, went forth in the evening to speak it. I imagine that he does that, too, on

occasions. It is a laudable thing to do in many respects, although it tends to make talk somewhat formal and liable to be scattered by an interruption. When Mr. Yeats rehearses a speech before making it in public, he is paying a great tribute to his audience by declining to offer them scamped or hastily-contrived opinions. Those who listen to him may be deceived into believing that he is speaking spontaneously, but they may be certain that what he says has been carefully considered, that he is speaking of things over which he has pondered and not just "saying the first thing that comes into his head."

Most men of letters do something of this sort. I have listened to Mr. Moore saying things which I subsequently read in the preface to the revised version of one of his novels; and I remember meeting "A. E." in Nassau Street, Dublin, one evening and being told a great deal about co-operation which I read in his paper, "The Irish Homestead" on the following morning.

I saw Mr. Yeats many times after that. I completed the MS. of "Mixed Marriage" and, much embarrassed, read it to him in his rooms. I read it very badly, too, and I am sure I bored him a

great deal; but he was kind and patient and he made some useful suggestions to me which I did not accept. I had too much conceit, as all young writers have, to be guided by a better man than myself. I know now that I should have done well to take his advice. He warned me against topical things and against politics and urged me to flee journalism as I would flee the devil; and he advised me to read Balzac. He was always advising me to read Balzac, but I never did. . . .

## VI

My memories of those days when I first knew him begin to be disconnected, and I find myself putting down things which happened after other things which I have still to relate; but I have never found a consecutive narrative very interesting, which, perhaps, is why I cannot read Pepys' Diary or Evelyn's Diary. I like to take things out of their turn, to go forward to one thing and then back to an earlier thing. I can only connect one incident or memory with another by taking them out of their order and doing violence to the natural sequence of things. Life is not so inter-

esting when all the factors between 1 and 100 are in sequence as it is when 26 and 60 are taken out of their place and put into coherence, temporary or permanent, with each other.

He said to me one evening that a man does not make firm friendships after the age of twenty-five. There is a good deal of truth in that statement, but I doubt whether it is generally true. It is true of him, for his mind turns back continually to the men who were his contemporaries twenty-five years ago, but it was not true of Dr. Johnson, who shed his friends as he grew in stature of mind. And perhaps what Dr. Johnson said to Sir Joshua Reynolds is more generally true than what Mr. Yeats said to me. "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man, Sir, should keep his friendship in constant repair." I do not think that anything is so remarkable about Mr. Yeats as his aloofness from the life of these times. He has very little knowledge of contemporary writing. I doubt whether he has read much or even anything by Mr. H. G. Wells or Mr. Arnold Bennett or Mr. John Galsworthy or Mr. Joseph Conrad. He said to me one night that after thirty a man ought to

read only a few books and read them continually. Some one had said this to him—I have forgotten who said it—and he passed on the advice to me; but he added, after a while, that "perhaps the age of thirty is too young," and suggested that the age should be raised to forty. It seemed very wrong advice to me.

An active mind will surely keep itself acquainted with new books and familiar with old books. I have heard many men, particularly schoolmasters and classical scholars, say with pride that they never read modern books. Such people boast that when a new book is published, they read an old one. They are, in my experience, dull people, sluggardly in mind, and pompous and set in manner. In many cases, particularly if they are schoolmasters, they neither read new books nor old ones. Dr. Johnson and his friends, however, appear to have been familiar with all the current literature of their time: history, fiction, poetry, drama, philosophy and theology; as well as with the ancient writings. They would not have *boasted* of their ignorance of the work of their contemporaries. In Mr. Yeats's case, however, this unfamiliarity with the work of men writing

to-day is explainable when one remembers that he cannot read easily because of his sight. When I first knew him, a friend came several times a week to read to him out of a copy of the Kelmscott Press edition to William Morris's "Earthly Paradise."

He had, like most young men of his time, been much influenced by William Morris, the only man for whom I ever heard him profess anything like affection, but I remember hearing him say once that he no longer got pleasure from reading or listening to Morris's poetry.

## VII

One night, I was at his rooms when Mr. G. M. Trevelyan, the historian and biographer of Garibaldi and John Bright, was present with his wife, a daughter of Mrs. Humphry Ward. Mr. Yeats talked much and well, and I remember his story of a dream he had had. He often told stories of his dreams, but some of them smelt of the midnight oil. A friend of his, he said, was contemplating submission to the Catholic Church. He had tried to dissuade her from this, but she went

away to another country in a state of irresolution. One night, he dreamt that he saw her entering a room full of beautiful people. She walked around the room, looking at these beautiful people who smiled and smiled and smiled, but said nothing. "And suddenly, in my dream," he said, "I realized that they were all dead!" "I woke up," he proceeded, "and I said to myself, 'She has joined the Catholic Church,' and she had." Mr. Trevelyan thought that the description of the Catholic Church as a room full of beautiful people, all smiling and all dead, was the most apt he had ever heard. He chuckled with contented anti-clericalism. Another night, when I was in his rooms, Miss Ellen Terry's son, Mr. Gordon Craig, came to see him; and a model of the Abbey Theatre was brought down from his bedroom to the candle-lit sitting room, where Mr. Craig experimented with lighting effects. Mr. Craig is a man of genius, but he is a very difficult and childish person, whose view of the theatre is nearly as damnable as that of the most vain of the lost tribe of actor-managers or their successors, the shop-keeper syndicates. Scenery and lighting effects were of greater consequence to Mr. Craig than the play itself! His

designs for scenery were very beautiful, indeed, but they were suitable only to romantic and poetical plays.

I remember that when he had manipulated Mr. Yeats's model theatre to his liking, he stood back from the scene, and said, "What a good thing it would be if we were to take all the seats out of the theatre so that the audience could move about and see my shadows!" Mr. Yeats dryly replied that this was hardly a practical proposal. I was irritated by Mr. Craig's remark which was in keeping with his general theory of the theatre. It seemed to me that he would, were he less difficult to work with, be as great a nuisance and danger to drama as any actor-manager in London. Sir Henry Irving and Sir Herbert Tree, turning the attention of the audience away from the play to the player and the scenery, were not any worse than Mr. Craig, anxious to turn the attention of the audience to his shadows. I was glad when this remarkable man was carried off by Mr. Albert Rutherston and Mr. Ernest Rhys to exhibit himself somewhere else.

Mr. Yeats was bitten with Mr. Craig's theories about lighting and scenery, and a large sum of

money for so poor a theatre as the Abbey, was spent on some of his "screens" for use in plays like "Deirdre." They were never used for anything else. When I went to Dublin to manage the Abbey, I was very anxious that we should employ a competent scene-builder to make some good "sets" for us, but Mr. Yeats said that scenery was of no consequence: the dirty hovel which we always employed to represent an Irish cottage or farm house would do well enough. I thought there was some oddness in this opinion when I remembered that the theatre had been almost bankrupted in order to purchase "screens" for occasional performances of his own one-act plays. He would spend hours in rehearsing the lighting of a scene for one of them: this "lime" was too strong and that "lime" was too weak or there was too much colour or there was not enough or the mingling of colours was not sufficiently delicate. One day, when he had worn out the patience of every one in the theatre, with his fussing over the lighting, he suddenly called out to the stage-manager, "That's it! That's it! You've got it right now!" "Ah, sure the damned thing's on fire," the stage-manager answered.

## VIII

I have written already that he is not happy with an individual: he must have an audience; and I remember now something that he said to me which supports my belief. We had been talking about Synge and his habit of listening at key-holes and cracks in the floor in order to hear scraps of conversation that he might put into his plays. I said I had been told that Synge, though excessively shy and silent in company, was a very companionable person with an individual. He was a good comrade on a country road, talking easily and naturally, and had the gift of friendliness with plain and simple people. Labourers and countrymen would talk to him as easily as they talked to one another, and would confide in him. I wondered whether there were as many entertaining tales to be heard from working-people in England as were to be heard from working-people in Ireland. Mr. Yeats thought that perhaps there were. He told me that the woman who cooked his meals and cleaned his rooms had begun to tell some story of a love affair to him, but that he had been too diffident to encourage her to go on with it.

He thought that if he had talked to her more than he had, she would have told him many stories of her youth in the country; but all his talk to her had been of food and household things. He is not a man in whom poor men and women confide. His civility to them is magnificent, but it overawes them and makes them as uneasy in one way as it pleases them in another. He is an excellent entertainer in a crowded room, but he is a poor companion on a road. He can talk well to a company of educated men and women, but he is tongue-tied in the presence of those who have little learning. When I survey my acquaintance with Yeats, I find strangely diverse thoughts rising in my mind. I am drawn to him and repelled by him. He stimulates me and depresses me. I am moved by the beauty of his work and distracted by its vagueness. I find in his writing and in his speech, great spiritual loveliness but curiously little humanity, and I have often wondered why it is that while Irishmen, even such as I am, are deeply moved by his little play, "Kathleen ni Houlihan," men of other countries—not only Englishmen—are left unmoved by it, unable, without a note in the program, to understand it. I

have seen this play performed very many times. I never missed seeing it, when it was done at the Abbey during the time that I was manager there. It moved me as much when I last saw it as it did when I first saw it; and I do not doubt that if I live to be an old man, it will move me as much in my old age as it has moved me in my youth. But it does not move men of other races. That is a singular thing. It denotes, I suppose, that while there is much that is national in Mr. Yeats's work, there is less that is universal.

One rises from his work, as one comes from his company, with a feeling of chilled respect that may settle into disappointment. It is as if one had been taken into a richly-decorated drawing-room when one had hoped to be taken into a green field. I have read Blake's poems and then I have read his and sought to see the resemblance that I am told is between them, but have not always found it. Blake wrote about things that he felt, but Mr. Yeats writes about things that he thinks; and thought changes and perishes, but feeling is permanent and unchangeable; thought separates and divides men, but feeling brings them together; and it may be that Mr. Yeats's aloofness from

men is due to the fact that he thinks too much and feels too little.

## IX

I think of him as a very lonely, isolated, aloof man. He is, so far as I am aware, the only English-speaking poet who did not write a poem about the War, a fact which is at once significant of the restraint he imposes upon himself and of his isolation from the common life of his time. I have never met any one who seems so unaware of temporary affairs as Mr. Yeats, and this unawareness is due, not to affectation, but to sheer lack of interest. He probably would not have known of the War at all had not the Germans dropped a bomb near his lodgings off the Euston Road. When Macaulay's New Zealander comes to examine the ruins of London, he will probably see Mr. Yeats, disembodied and unaware that he is disembodied or that London is in ruins, sitting on a slab with a planchette. He is younger than Mr. Shaw by ten years, but might be ten years older. His verse and his speech and his manner are all elderly, and his conversation is

composed chiefly of reminiscences of men who have been dead for many years, so that one imagines he has not had a friend since 1890. There is absolutely no suggestion of youth in his writings. In the poem entitled, "To a Child Dancing in the Wind," he says:

> I could have warned you, but you are young,
> So we speak a different tongue

and again:

> But I am old and you are young,
> And I speak a barbarous tongue.

I do not know what age Mr. Yeats was when he wrote those lines, but they are included in a collection of poems, dated "1912-1914," and at most he could not have been fifty, for he was born in Dublin in 1865.

The sense of age seems to have oppressed his mind for many years, perhaps for the whole of his creative life. He feels that he has outlived his generation and is lost in a period of time peculiarly alien to him.

> When I was young,
> I had not given a penny for a song
> Did not the poet sing it with such airs

> That one believed he had a sword upstairs:
> Yet would be now, could I but have my wish,
> Colder and dumber and deafer than a fish.

This coldness closing on his heart and congealing all his generous emotions, causes him, at the end of a graceful book, "Reveries Over Childhood and Youth" (in itself, significant of the age-obsession which possesses his mind) to declare that "all life, weighed in the scales of my own life, seems to me a preparation for something that never happens," and leaves his readers wondering why a man who began his life by singing songs with such airs "that one believed he had a sword upstairs" should stumble into dismal prose towards the end of it, pronouncing life to be a cheerless deceit.

His effect on young men is peculiar. His brilliant conversation is very attractive to them, but his insensibility to the presence of human beings repels them. "A. E." once told me that Mr. Arthur Griffith, the founder of the Sinn Fein movement, drew young people to him by the strength of his hatred, but finally repelled them by his complete lack of charity and love. A nature compounded principally or exclusively of hatred must be destructive. No man can construct any-

thing unless love and charity predominate in his heart. Mr. Griffith, throughout his career, has never been notable for his power to make things. He could not even make his own movement grow, for Sinn Fein became a popular and appealing force only after Padraic Pearce and Thomas Macdonagh and James Connolly had put a fire into the machinery of it on Easter Monday, 1916. There is something terribly ironical in the fact that James Connolly, to whom Mr. Griffith offered every possible opposition in his lifetime, should by his death have helped to put Mr. Griffith in a position of authority to which his own intellectual and spiritual qualities could never have raised him. Mr. Yeats has something of the unhumanity of Mr. Griffith. His talk is brilliant, indeed, but it is not comradely talk. It never lapses from high quality to the easy familiarities which humanize all relationships. He is more fastidious about his speech than he is about his friends. It would shock him more to use a bad word than to make a bad friend, because he is more aware of bad words than of bad men; and he would be quicker to forgive a crime than to forgive a vulgar phrase. I have never heard him use a common ex-

pression. He once repeated an angry speech of William Morris to me with an air almost apologetic for using profane language, not because it was profane but because it was inelegant. He never says "Damn!" or "Blast!" when he is angry. . . . He is one of the loneliest men in the world, for he cannot express himself except in a crowd. Dr. Stockman said that the strongest man in the world is the man who stands absolutely alone—a feat which is surely impossible—and this specious statement has supported many ineffective egoists in their belief that neurosis is strength and misbehaviour a sign of individuality. But the penalty of isolation is that the isolated cannot dispense with an amenable crowd. The hermit must have a succession of respectful pilgrims to his cave, each one murmuring, "There is but one God and Thou art His Prophet!" until at last the hermit begins to believe that *he* is God and God is *his* prophet. Hermits have followers, or, perhaps one ought to say, curious visitors, but they have no friends. Why should they have friends? They have not got the social sense nor can they take part in the common labours of mankind. They live in caves and desert places because they are not fit to live in houses

and places that are inhabited. But even the hermits, wrapped in self-sufficiency, realize that no man is effective without his fellows, and so, though they cannot make friends, they make disciples. This is a truth which all the great lonely men from Adam to Robinson Crusoe have discovered, that a man by himself is ineffective and without interest. Life for Adam remained uneventful until the arrival of Eve: the island of Juan Fernandez was livelier after Man Friday came to keep Crusoe company. For fellowship is life, as Morris said, and lack of fellowship is death.

There is no poet, not even Keats or Shelley, who has so much of pure poetry in his work as Mr. Yeats has in his, and perhaps that is enough; but there is no other poet, not even Mr. Kipling, who has so little understanding of human kind. It is an odd commentary on his relationship to his countrymen that while he was writing the bitter poem, entitled "September, 1913," with the desolating refrain:

> Romantic Ireland's dead and gone—
> It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Thomas Macdonagh and Padraic Pearse and James

Connolly were preparing themselves for a romantic death.

John Davidson, in a book called "Sentences and Paragraphs," writes of Keats that, "beginning and ending his intemperate period with the too ample verge and room, the trailing fringe and sample-like embroidery of 'Endymion,' he was soon writing the most perfect odes in the language." Mr. Yeats, in spite of some reluctant instructions into enthusiastic movements, escaped "the intemperate period"; but he did so at the cost of his youth and ardour. Like the Magi in his poem of that name, he, "being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied," seeks "to find once more" "the uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor"; but it eludes him, and will always elude him, because he thinks of its habitation as "a bestial floor." It can only be found by a poet who, whatever happens, still believes that the earth is a place where God may yet walk in safety. Mr. Yeats is the greatest poet that Ireland has produced, but he has meant very little to the people of Ireland, for he has forgotten the ancient purpose of the bards, to urge men to a higher destiny by reminding them of their high origin, and has lived, aloof and disdainful, as far from human kind as he can conveniently get.

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